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FRANK SWINNERTON:
THE LIFE AND WORKS OF A BOOKMAN

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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SUMMARY

Frank Swinnerton worked as a clerk for J M Dent & Co. between 1901 and 1907 and as a publisher's reader for Chatto & Windus from 1907 until 1926, during which time he began his career as a writer of fiction, became influential as a reviewer and commentator on literary fashions, and began close friendships with Arnold Bennett, H G Wells and Hugh Walpole. In 1926 he left London to live in Cranleigh, Surrey, as a full-time writer of novels, short stories, critical works, book and theatre reviews, and miscellaneous articles for newspapers and periodicals. He died at the age of ninety-eight in 1982.

This is the first biography of Frank Swinnerton to be undertaken in Great Britain. An analysis has been made of each of his works, both novels and non-fiction. His influence in literary circles has been assessed, and his contribution to the book world is placed within the background of literary output and trends in the twentieth century. Swinnerton was not a great writer, but his temperament, circumstances and talent combined to produce a respected literary figure whose strength was his perception and understanding of the progress of the British literary world through the centuries.

Swinnerton's numerous friendships are dealt with as they occurred, although major relationships are examined more fully at the point where the friend died. For example, details on H G Wells can be found with his death in 1946 and on Compton Mackenzie with his death in 1972. Greater space has been given to his involvements with Arnold Bennett and Hugh Walpole, in separate chapters placed close to the time of their deaths in 1931 and 1941. One other chapter stands out of sequence. This examines Swinnerton's relationship with his two wives: his complex courtship of Helen Dircks and his second marriage to Mary Bennett. This period, between 1917 and 1924, which also includes a description of his first lecture tour of the USA in 1923, has been placed immediately after chapters 7 and 8, which examine Swinnerton's general life and work during the same period.

Apart from published works and newspaper and periodical articles, the main material used has been Swinnerton's personal diaries, which date from 1910 to 1978, and the correspondence and miscellaneous papers in his personal possession. Also consulted has been a doctoral thesis by Jesse Franklin McCartney presented to the University of Arkansas in 1965, which annotates the large collection of correspondence by Frank Swinnerton to writers, publishers, bookmen and other literary figures, as well as their replies, which are housed in the University library. Full texts of these letters have been obtained where appropriate and used in this work. Professor Blair Rouse of the University of Arkansas wrote a critical appreciation of Swinnerton's work in the 1960s and his widow has allowed use of the unpublished manuscript and letters exchanged between Rouse and Swinnerton, and has sent correspondence between Swinnerton and the Pinker family. Finally, Swinnerton's friends and family have provided facts, opinions and reminiscences.

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Chapter 1

ANCESTRY

A talent for craftsmanship and an independence of spirit were characteristics of Frank Swinnerton's ancestors. He inherited both. His formative years added realism, industry, an ability to look at life with equanimity and without envy, and a sense of contentment, born of a knowledge of and confidence in himself. The Staffordshire-based family history society, The Swinnerton Society, considers Frank Swinnerton, their first Vice-President, one of the most distinguished men the Family has ever produced. The name can be traced back to the thirteenth century and includes Swinnerton Pottery, makers of popular, cheap earthenware crockery, sold at Woolworths early in this century. Frank's own story begins in about 1800 with the birth of Samuel Swinnerton in Stone, Staffordshire, a few miles from Swynnerton, the spiritual family home. In 1825 he had a son, George, born in Hanley, who was Frank's paternal grandfather. Known as 'Old Chap', he brought this branch of the family to North London and denied his ancestors by declaring he had been self-created. His profession as a glass cutter kept his wife, Harriet Bunce, and eight children in comfort in City Road, Islington, which the young Frank remembered visiting on Sundays, until a love of betting helped him squander his wealth. His third son, Charles, wanted to become a Baptist minister, but was apprenticed instead to his future father-in-law and became a commercial copper plate engraver, an unfortunate choice of craft in a Victorian England where imitation copper plate types had been invented, thus ensuring that Charles's skill would become unwanted. His frustration at his inability to achieve

a regular income broke his spirit. His intellectually poor boyhood drove him to the working men's college, to the *Penny Poets* and *The Literary World* in an effort to improve his mind. His politics were Gladstonian, his nature was kind but lacking in a sense of humour. At last he found regular employment at twenty-seven shillings per week but the change in family fortunes arrived too late and he died of cancer of the liver, aged fifty, on 11 August 1900. This was Frank's father. Swinnerton kept in touch with many of his uncles and aunts and their offspring, and despite not being close to them, retained an active interest in their movements and the events in their lives. Appendix I shows their names and professions. It was Charles's younger brother, Tom, a furrier, who helped Swinnerton's family during Charles's last illness.

On the distaff side the family hailed from Scotland. Frank's grandfather, Richard Pell Cottam, or 'Grumps', was a steel engraver who married a map-colourist. Of his three daughters and one son, Frank's mother, Rose (1855-1930) was the eldest, and all the children had an artistic or musical talent. Swinnerton remembered this grandfather well. He was musically gifted and once sang principal tenor in a cathedral choir. A delicate and scrupulous craftsman he had the ability to earn well, but despite his shrewdness he underwrote a friend's debts and was left penniless when he was let down. His strong personality was often tactless, and age brought great physical pain and habits which annoyed young Frank who, though he tried, could find no instinctive love for the old man. His Aunt Kate, the second sister, played the most active part in Swinnerton's life. A water colourist by profession, her charm, eagerness and intelligence

attracted several suitors. Whilst engaged to one, she suddenly married another at the British Embassy in Paris on the day of Victor Hugo's funeral in May 1885. Still a baby, Swinnerton witnessed the procession in someone's arms whilst waiting for the marriage cortege to be allowed to proceed. Kate moved to North America and, being childless, made a fuss of Frank when she visited England. On one visit in Spring 1914 she learnt that her husband had filed for divorce. Swinnerton promptly gave her the £60 royalties he had just received for *On the Staircase* so she could return to Canada. When she turned up again in England, penniless, he saw his mother cry for the first time because of the waste of Frank's hard-earned money. As she aged Frank took care of her, but he never forgot his mother's distress and grew increasingly impatient with her.

Swinnerton worshipped his mother, who had been born in Carlisle and attended finishing school at Nyon on Lake Geneva with Kate. Her strength of character provided the support through the years of poverty which Frank experienced as a child. Yet despite the hardships this small, imaginative, wise woman kept morale so high that Swinnerton's memory of his childhood⁴ was a happy one. Never small-minded, this simple, yet quick-witted homemaker was a paragon to Frank. Known always by her nickname, the 'OM' (Old Ma), she hated housework, sewing and knitting, but was forced by circumstances to perform all domestic routines. She never scolded, punished or lectured and Frank was unable to lie to her. A designer of labels until her marriage when she was 24, her brief honeymoon in Ventnor was soon followed by the birth of Philip on 10 August 1879 in Highbury. Age brought physical deterioration to

Rose, but despite becoming an invalid she remained sharp-witted. When unable to live alone, she was taken in by Philip's household in Highgate and then resided in various nursing homes in London and the South East until her death on 18 July 1930.

Frank came into the world prematurely on 12 August 1884. His father had gone to fetch the doctor and his aunt the midwife. Rose was alone in her father's drawing room when Frank was born. The baby cried out and fell asleep, so that when the midwife arrived she presumed him to be dead. In later life he was fond of using the unusual circumstances of his birth as an indication of his character: his independent nature; the feeling that he had no obstacles in life; his good-humoured self-reliance; his optimism and equanimity.

Chapter 2

YOUTH

Paris was cheaper than London in 1884 and as a consequence Frank spent his early years there, finally returning to his grandfather's home at 150, Farringdon Road, then opposite the prison. They were soon on the move again to Cavendish Buildings, Clerkenwell, but stayed only three years before returning to Farringdon Road. It was a happy place in those days, with the horse drawn tramcars passing in front of the house. Christmas days were spent with other Swinnerton relatives at the home of his paternal grandfather in City Road, whilst on Boxing Days visits were made to pantomimes at the Grand Theatre, Islington. Frank's early education was haphazard, erratic, eccentric and incomplete. His only memory of his first school, the Home and Colonial School near King's Cross, was of an accident when he trapped his leg in some bent railings; the scar remained all his life. Drama and music were introduced early. Philip loved the theatre and would take Frank with him to the front row of the gallery at the Agricultural Hall, Islington to watch the Mohawk Minstrels and to develop a talent for step-dancing, mime and comedy. Both boys sang in the choir of St Mary's, Aldermanbury.' This memory was often recalled in later years and talking to Roy Plomley in 1974² Swinnerton remembered that because of his small size no surplice would fit him, so one had to be pinned up. This was so poorly adapted that when he led out the choir a perceptible titter in the congregation followed his progress. Being led home by his father through deserted streets, or on the Underground when it rained, completed his Sunday routine. There were also bus rides and visits

to Brighton, and Frank was happy. He liked school, and his parents' liberal attitudes to parenthood allowed him the freedom at home to join his father and Grumps at work on the first floor, or his mother and her sister Lily on the floor below.

Frank taught himself to read at an early age, which was fortuitous as paralysis caused by diphtheria left him bedridden for two years when he was eight. With a useless arm and leg, a twisted mouth causing inarticulate speech, Frank read avidly. Favourite reading was Howard Pyle's *Robin Hood*. Philip would use a go-cart to move Frank about and this soon became a stagecoach for highwayman Philip to hold up. Memories of these games influenced the choice of Frank's first bought book. This was a story of Australian Highwaymen, written by Hume Nisbet in 1890 and entitled *Bail Up!* In his mature years Swinnerton reread the book for one of his *Gog and Magog* letters and as he dwelt on these childhood years he acknowledged that the book was poor, but its value was undisputed as it had inspired Frank, the child, to read.

Recovered from his illness, Frank was sent with Philip to a newly-fitted-out school with only six pupils and one teacher, who was inadequate as a supervisor, and he witnessed some vicious bullying. Both children left abruptly with little improvement in their education when they caught Scarlet Fever and were confined to bed for a month. Frank furthered his reading, with *Swiss Family Robinson* being his new favourite. Philip never returned to school.

Having turned early to the world of books, Frank began to feel the stirrings of an author. Philip had produced some numbers of a school magazine and Frank had prepared to contribute. Though he never did so, he was inspired to start a hand-written periodical

for home-reading, *The Family World*, a fragment of which still remains. At ten years old he had decided to become a journalist. At the same time he was given a set of Halma, a board game, and he used the miniature pawns to create characters and stories. 'They were my real introduction to, and preparation for, the novelist's craft. Ever since they were given to me I have been composing stories about invented human beings who behave as they do because of the forces of character and the influences of the environment'.² The gift of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* exerted a profound influence on his attitude to the novel and its content. In his Autobiography he reflects that English reviewers regularly likened his work to Arnold Bennett's, whilst a German-Czech had written a whole book attempting to show that he had borrowed George Gissing's style. Yet Swinnerton always maintained that his only two influences were Louisa May Alcott from his formative years and Henry James - a man he was destined never to meet - when he was older.

The Swinnertons now became very poor and were forced to move into three rooms in a house in Hornsey road, Holloway; the local public baths were their bathroom. Each floor housed a family and though the Swinnertons did not mix with the others, the lack of privacy made it easy to gain access to each flat. This situation gave rise to an incident where a woman living downstairs once intimated that Frank had stolen her purse, which she had left on the kitchen table. In fact it had been pocketed by her husband on his way to work. This new poverty was caused by Charles Swinnerton's inability to find regular work with the collapse of the market for copper-plate engravers. The ten to fifteen

shillings which he now earnt on average were not enough to support the family. Philip had been apprenticed to a firm of lithographers, but he received no wages. Rose earned a few shillings making skirts and designing small show cards for a friend who ran a bicycle shop. Often there was nothing to eat and consequently throughout this period Frank was often ill. Although he was now back at school, taught by the husband of an old friend of his mother's, lack of money hindered his education. He learnt to colour maps and to compose, but failed to improve his grasp of punctuation⁴ or grammar. He made friends easily, a characteristic which served him well all his life and he was often asked to tea or to parties, but he never reciprocated because pride forbade him to acknowledge his poverty. However, these six dismal years did not affect his outlook and he was not unhappy. His mother's great strength of character and constant cheerfulness helped maintain the family spirit despite his father's gradual decline and no scar of social inferiority remained with Frank. His natural buoyancy and self-assurance made him popular, but the shame of being poor left him with a life-long frugality and he always lived in fear of being penniless again.

There now followed a quick succession of homes. Circumstances forced the Swinnertons to move to rooms infested with vermin. Their brief stay was either because of the squalor or because of their inability to pay the rent. Whilst at their next home in Finsbury Park Charles met a solicitor, who was a former suitor of his sister, who was looking for help to look after an old, half-witted man. So they moved into his charming East Finchley house, where Rose acted as housekeeper. Philip was now nineteen and had

begun to earn some money selling freelance black and white drawings. Frank too began to look for work. He had been stung by a thoughtless comment made by his father concerning the cost of maintaining the family. At the first attempt he was taken on by Glasgow periodical publishers, Hay Nisbet & Co as an office boy in their Bouverie Street offices at six shillings per week. Work made Frank happy and Fleet Street always seemed sunny to him. He addressed envelopes, copied letters, ran errands for the staff and filled the water can from the tap in the rat-infested basement.

The company's periodicals were printed in Glasgow and dealt solely with Scottish affairs. The London office was the centre for advertising and canvassing. One of Frank's more disagreeable jobs was to wrap and deliver weekly free copies of the periodicals^s to advertising agents in the City and the West End. He knew his efforts would be wasted as his offerings would be destined for the waste paper basket. But he did enjoy 'pedestrian gazing' whilst out on his rounds. Back in the office the Scottish Mr Nisbet showed an amused, paternal kindness towards Frank, and the London Manager, the benign Mr Paul, treated him as a friend. The majority of the staff were kind and he was allowed plenty of spare time and freedom of action. He turned his attention to the Dreyfus Affair and the South African War. Born of Liberal parents who read radical newspapers, Frank suddenly became politically minded and anti-imperialist. His first printed article was a pro-Boer letter to Harold Grost's *The Review of the Week*. Then he started a small hectographed monthly journal, *Jottings*. Every member of the firm either subscribed or was placed on the free list, and some even

contributed to it. The staff were amused, but also impressed by Frank's literary potential.

The domestic arrangements with the solicitor friend inevitably did not work out and the Swinnertons found new lodgings in East Finchley. Charles, still only forty-nine, was dying and Frank realised that more income was needed. The eight shillings he was now earning was insufficient and sadly, after sixteen happy months, Hay Nisbet & Co let him go but not before James R Nisbet, the Managing Director, wrote a superb testimonial, the only one Frank ever possessed. It did not help him retain his new job at *The Estates Gazette*, where he collected and analysed announcements of property sales and set up lists from the material gathered. Frank was soon fired, partly because of his own incompetence and partly because the owner of the paper took exception to the fact that Frank had been allowed to add some paragraphs to a column of miscellaneous notes, known in the office as 'Brickerbrah'.

Charles died in August 1900 and after his burial in Finchley the family moved to ancient rooms with sloping ceilings in Southwood Lane, Highgate Village. Philip, at twenty-one, was now the breadwinner. He had begun to make a reputation as a black and white artist in Harmsworth penny and ha'penny journals. He drew headings for *The Boy's Friend* and comic pictures for *Chips* and other similar papers. He made the rounds of editors' offices whilst Frank embarked on the last of his early jobs in the office of a steamship company publicity agent. He was paid twelve shillings per week plus two shillings food allowance, but his boredom and dislike of one of the owner's sons ensured that this employment would be short lived.

It was a new friendship which would transport Frank into the world of publishing. In 1899 whilst at Hay Nisbet & Co he had spotted a reference to an amateur journal, *The Scribbler* in a copy of R S Warren Bell's magazine for boys, *The Captain*. He sent off for a specimen copy. Correspondence followed and the editors encouraged Frank to submit his own material. The elder Howe brother, Garfield, a few years older than Frank, was the chief editor and Swinnerton respected him for his intelligence, seriousness, interest in crafts, ethics, politics, general literature and book-production, and his critical abilities. Percival, the younger Howe brother was still a day boy at University College School and at the time was interested in history and drama. This fastidious, witty, charming boy was to become Swinnerton's closest and life-long friend. The brothers extended the hand of friendship and with open-minded generosity encouraged Frank's own abilities. After six months Garfield invited Frank for tea and told him that he was about to leave Fisher Unwin to take up an appointment with Dent. There his abilities soon gained him promotion. Feeling that Frank should be in a profession better suited to his literary aspirations than the shipping firm for which he worked, and finding Frank willing, Garfield managed to obtain a situation for him as a reception clerk, salesman and utility boy at a wage of thirteen shillings per week.

Chapter 3

THE DENT YEARS 1901-1907

The leisurely pace and lack of competitiveness experienced by publishing firms in the nineteenth century were beginning to disappear. A new urgency was overtaking the trade with the rise of literary agents, of ambitious young men of ideas, of authors' voices demanding a better deal.' The established publishers such as William Heinemann, Chapman & Hall, Grant Richards, Macmillan, and J M Dent & Co watched the changes from their Covent Garden establishments. The last named had recently taken over the former premises of Macmillan at 29 Bedford Street, which comprised several floors in two buildings. Some of the rooms were let out to the Yorick Club, a group of artists, actors and writers who met there socially, heard by Swinnerton but never seen. An enormous showroom took up half of the downstairs and in it was Swinnerton's office, a glass box surrounding an electricity-lit desk. For three years from 1901 he acted as reception clerk and handled the firm's correspondence for five and a half days each week. Dealing with callers, many of them famous figures, and listening to their preoccupations suited Swinnerton well. He observed and remembered and these people made a deep impression on his youthful mind. He encountered H G Wells; the three Robinson brothers; G K Chesterton; Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon; Arthur Symons; Ernest Rhys, the tall, slim editor of Everyman; Reginald Knowles, the designer of lettering and ornaments for Dent bindings; Herbert Railton, Dent's cousin and an architectural draughtsman; the researcher and translator, Marian Edwardes; the Dante scholars, Philip Wickstead and Edmund Gardner; and Walter Jerrold.

Old J M Dent was a man feared and hated by his employees. In an interview given at the end of his life² Swinnerton admitted that Old Dent was one of only two men who had earned his enmity. He considered him a bully and a tyrant, but allowed that he had an eye for quality in book production. Within an hour of Swinnerton's arrival Old Dent telephoned him, but Swinnerton was unable to follow the conversation because of Dent's habit of not properly depressing the whalebone piece, which carried the voice. It was not an auspicious beginning. Because of a childhood accident, Dent was lame. He would hobble impulsively round the office, exacting, eagle-eyed and thoughtful. Always clad in a grey suit, his saintly, bespectacled, medium-height, silver-haired appearance, belied his easily-roused, fiery temper. He never praised, paid badly, could not spell and littered his speech with malapropisms. Yet he had taste, an eye for good work and a real love of books and although good men left him as soon as possible, it was not before they had learnt a good deal from him.

Joseph Mallaby Dent was born in Yorkshire in 1849. He was apprenticed to a printer, but for three years, until the business failed, he learnt the binding trade in Darlington from a Mr Rutherford. Still only eighteen Dent travelled to London to complete his printing apprenticeship with a Mr Price. He married his landlady's daily help and both had to work to remain solvent. The birth of two children by the time he was twenty-five forced him to consider a more ambitious venture and he set up as a book-binder. Scrupulous about presentation, he deplored the quality of print and paper available and began to increase his business by printing the books himself. When Mr Price died he took over his

business, but the premises burnt down and with the insurance money he was able to build new ones. More than any other publisher Dent was concerned with producing quality books, using good paper and strong binding, at a price the working-class purchaser could afford. His cheap editions were well produced. He was scrupulous about their physical appearance and had been known to destroy a whole print run because he had considered the printing unsatisfactory.² His wife died in 1887 and he remarried two years later. His domesticity assured once again, he turned his attention to the production of series. First he conceived a pocket edition of Shakespeare's plays, a single play in each volume. He insisted on a good presentation and with the help of Israel Gollancz, the first volume, *The Tempest*, printed by George Turnbull, was issued at one shilling in January 1894. The fortieth and final work, *The Sonnets*, appeared in October 1896. Each year sales reached 250,000. Also with Gollancz's help he launched the Temple classics. In 1897 Dent secured the Bedford Street premises at £750 per annum and began pondering a new project. Thus the Everyman series was conceived.

Dent's reputation chiefly rests as a reprinter of cheap pocket editions. He became one of the few publishers whose name and publications were familiar to all book buyers. Though he was generally feared and not greatly loved, he could also be charming to those he liked. Swinnerton soon made a favourable impression on him and Dent came to trust him. Frank would be entrusted with the purchase of Dent's lunch - a penny roll, a penny pat of butter, a penny apple, a penny piece of cheese and a bottle of ginger beer - and ensured that his beaker and plate were scrupulously clean.

These lunches became famous and visitors on occasion would find themselves sharing them. One day Dent wanted one hundred books brought in and decided that Swinnerton should do the job. But Frank, a junior, was not in a position to dictate and the manager refused to install a substitute in reception during Frank's absence and subsequently performed the assignment himself. Some errors were made and Dent summoned Frank to complain. Always upset by injustice, and not being an employee long enough to be afraid, Swinnerton cut him short: 'You must know it's absurd to speak to me like that, Mr Dent. I'm a boy; I can't insist on going out when I'm told I mustn't'.⁴ Dent was speechless but said no more, never again raising his voice to Swinnerton. The latter grew quite bold and was permitted a degree of cheek, such as the occasion when he refused to run out and buy a ha'penny cigarette for Dent, offering one of his own instead. This relationship inspired in Swinnerton a kind of amused hostile affection and in Dent a pleasant charm.

Swinnerton's first three years in the glass cage were the ones he would remember. He would gaze out of the window and watch the street life. In Spring the outside door swung idly in the breeze, the quiet streets were populated only by pigeons and sparrows, a row of hansom cabs awaited fares, and members of the Yorick Club grew more cheerful as the day progressed. One of the staff, W G Stirret, introduced Frank to the Proms, which he was to frequent for the next twenty years, and he would lend him money to buy Continental novels translated into English. Frank read avidly - anything and everything he could obtain. He also fell in love for the first time with one of the typists, and once the ardour had cooled a pleasant relationship developed.

In the evenings if homeward bound he would catch a yellow horse-omnibus from Tottenham Court Road to the Archway Tavern, Highgate. He would read, write, go to the Marlborough Theatre, Holloway or browse in the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institute. On other evenings he would take tea at St George's Restaurant in St Martin's Lane, where vegetarian dishes and good coffee could be bought cheaply. In Summer Swinnerton and the Howes would take long walks in Orpington and Sevenoaks where they discussed heredity, free will, ethics, utopias and novels and as their friendship grew talk turned to metaphysics, psychology and economics. In Winter their haunts were the lecture halls of Central and Greater London where Gilbert Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc and George Bernard Shaw performed. Many evenings were also spent editing Dent's monthly school periodical, *Dent's School Newspaper* and Frank also helped William Macdonald edit a new edition of Lamb's work.

Swinnerton had an enormous respect and affection for Dent's son, Hugh, who also earned his gratitude. When Hugh needed a confidential clerk Frank was promoted and was moved into Hugh's office. Swinnerton believed this may have been a reward for coming to Hugh's rescue when Old Dent had returned unexpectedly from one of his regular trips to Florence to find Hugh gone. Swinnerton had kept Dent occupied whilst the alarm went out for Hugh and a scene was avoided. Frank had been selected over Garfield Howe and the latter subsequently left the company, although he never blamed Frank for the incident. Promotion lost Frank his contact with people and he was not as happy writing letters and office-bound, dealing with paperwork. Yet he was in a privileged position when

secret preparations were made for the launch of the ambitious Everyman Library.

It was 1904 and for the first time Dent had some capital at his disposal, some £10,000 with which to underwrite the enterprise. He had conceived an idea to reprint the classics as part of a series, where each volume would be of uniform appearance with good bindings, quality paper and at a price of one shilling each everyman could afford. Ernest Rhys, at three guineas per volume, agreed to edit the series. Only a select few were involved: Dent and Hugh, Rhys, Marian Edwardes and in Rhys's words: 'two or three clerks, a clever boy among them - Frank Swinnerton, the future novelist'.⁵ Meetings would stretch into the night as each author was discussed and finally fifty were selected to be issued together with one hundred and fifty to be available by the end of the first year. Rhys remembers those sessions:

J M Dent was, in effect, an impetuous co-editor. Working with him one had to show exactly why a book counted and what were its salient qualities. A rare gymnastic to spend hours pouring over a pile of books, deciding, revoking, quarrelling. Never was a man formed of such mixed ingredients: true enthusiasm for a master of verse or prose, calculating shrewdness, an uncanny frankness about himself and his affairs, and overweening ambition. In sheer business faculty he was wanting, but he had an able backer in his son Hugh who, like me, often suffered in that whirlwind campaign'.⁶

Profit margins were calculated to the last farthing, hours were spent discussing paper and bindings. Rhys was inspired to think of the series title and the quotation, some words from an old play: 'Everyman I will go with thee and be thy guide, in thy most need to go by thy side'. The intention was to publish 1000 volumes in all under thirteen divisions⁷ and no title was considered too large. Eminent writers such as Hilaire Belloc, John Masefield and G K Chesterton wrote prefaces for a one guinea fee each and in order to ensure secrecy the printing was undertaken at several premises. The launch in February 1906 caused such a stir that presses, paper makers and binders could not keep pace. For the first fortnight Swinnerton dictated letters for twelve hours each day. At the time he was earning thirty shillings per week and his reward for his extra work was the choice of three volumes from the series.⁸ Soon Dent could not keep up with demand for the series, more money was needed, a new bindery was built. By 1920 750 volumes had appeared. Printing was spread over several houses and editors were specially selected for certain works. Most titles had been selected from authors whose copyright had expired, but after Dent's death modern authors such as Walpole, Priestley, Wells and Galsworthy were introduced. In 1935 there was a change of format, lettering and cloth. In 1938 Swinnerton joined the ranks with his *The Georgian Literary Scene*, volume number 943.

Philip Lee Warner joined the firm and his personality, insolent manner and management style wreaked havoc and his stay was brief. He liked Frank and when he joined Chatto & Windus he remembered the young confidential clerk and in 1907 offered him the post of proof reader and general assistant at an extra five

shillings per week at Chatto. Swinnerton was ready to move on and accepted. Old Dent had sent him a message on learning of his impending departure accusing him of acting unwisely and he never acknowledged Swinnerton again. Mr Jackson replaced Frank, but he constantly needed Frank's advice about the work, and his health suffered at the firm to such an extent that he left within six months and set up business with a Mr Sidgwick.

Old Dent died in 1926 during the General Strike and with other matters concerning the press his death passed virtually unnoticed. Swinnerton kept in touch with Hugh, attended his wedding and would invite him to his future home in Surrey. Hugh would send him books to review when Swinnerton worked for *The Observer* and their letters often discussed possible works for Dent to publish. Swinnerton attended the Dent Jubilee Dinner in 1938, gave the Dent Memorial Lecture in 1939 and attended the dinner marking the sixtieth anniversary of *Everyman's* launch at the Savoy with J B Priestley, these two men being the sole surviving authors whose works had been included in the series.

Chapter 4

THE CHATTO YEARS 1907 - 1910

Chatto and Windus had been established for fifty-two years when Swinnerton took up his post. It had been founded in 1855 by the twenty-three year old John Camden Hotten. Apprenticed at fourteen to John Petheram, a bookseller in Chancery Lane, Hotten set up on his own at 151b Piccadilly following a visit to America with his brother. He began to undertake publishing ventures specialising in books on antiquities, historical oddities and the writings of American literary figures such as Mark Twain, Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe. He exploited the fact that few Americans took advantage of copyright and so he avoided paying royalties. His reputation for these types of works was superseded when in 1866 he printed and published *A History of Signboards*, the success of which demanded several reprints and also Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*, which no other publisher would risk because it was deemed immoral. This set the tone for the young firm as publishers of young creative writers. Hotten was an enigmatic man, full of energy and very astute, creative and bold. Before his early death at the age of forty-three he had moved to premises at 74/75 Piccadilly.

His successor, Andrew Chatto, the son of a writer, had been with the firm since he was fifteen. He bought the company from Hotten's widow for £25,000 and W B Windus came into partnership with him. The latter wrote lyrical verse and his *Under Dead Leaves* had been published by Hotten in 1871. Percy Spalding, a one time bank clerk and son of H B Spalding, the paper merchant, joined in 1876. In 1880 bookselling was dropped when a move was made to 214

Piccadilly. When Swinnerton arrived the firm had been at 111 St Martins Lane for four years and its last home during Swinnerton's years there was 97/99 St Martins Lane after 1918.

Windus was a businessman, but little has been documented about his life. Chatto was a typical English gentleman, heavily built, bearded and genial, a man of wide interests, an amateur scientist and astronomer, a cellist and yachtsman. He and Spalding guided the firm into the twentieth century through forty prosperous years becoming known for quality of output with works by Sir Walter Besant, Wilkie Collins, Ouida, R L Stevenson, some Hardy and vintage Trollope. Both men were old-fashioned, allowing no telephones or typewriters, and agreements were made on half sheets of notepaper. Office routine was an extension of home: coal fires burned in the grates and Spalding would ride on horseback in the park in office hours. Their list of titles, which included Wilkie Collins, Mark Twain and Stevenson, were selling well, but publishers need new and successful books each season to survive and it was felt that new blood was wanted. Consequently Warner was appointed in 1905 with a brief to compete for new business, which was being won by new and enterprising publishers.

Warner repeated his performance at Dent's and in three years shook the foundations of the establishment with his personality and caused consternation among the staff before moving on. One person who suffered from Warner was Chatto's toughest and most powerful personality, the dominant Victorian tyrant, Hytch, who considered Warner a revolutionary.' Hytch paid for his hostility over a small incident about the setting of some books in which Swinnerton had been involved. Warner won the day, but Hytch the

battle as he outstayed Warner, who left in 1909, leaving Swinnerton, who was responsible to him, temporarily insecure about his own future. However, Spalding offered him the role of reader and Swinnerton's future was secured. Despite Warner's whirlwind connection with the firm he left behind a legacy. There was the Medici prints enterprise, whereby a new method of collotype was used to reproduce famous oil paintings. He persuaded Israel Gollancz to edit the King's Classics and Medieval Library and he introduced the head of Minerva as a trade mark. He set standards in book production which have been maintained ever since and introduced to the firm the two young men who would remain for almost twenty years each - Frank Swinnerton and Geoffrey Whitworth, a founder of the British Drama League.

Swinnerton found his new employer a marked contrast to his former one. The office seemed quieter and less interesting. At Dent's everyone had been a character. His first office was small, dark and windowless and there was little prospect of wandering about as he used to do. The building consisted of a bare-boarded warehouse, lined to the ceiling with bookracks, with the packing department at one end and the counter, near the front door, at the other. The absence of a great showroom was a disappointment. Swinnerton missed the instructive display of Dent's publications files, which had taught him so much and he felt shut off from everything except his work. As a consequence, after eighteen years with them, he never knew their business or books with real intimacy. His closest acquaintance after Warner was his office companion, Blank, who was entertaining and informative, happy to share his knowledge of the trade with Swinnerton.

By 1907 Chatto had effectively retired² and although he continued to read manuscripts he had lost touch with popular taste. As a consequence he had lost the opportunity of publishing Kipling, and exasperation with Bennett's *Sacred and Profane Love* had robbed him of the author's future works and therefore the classic *Old Wives' Tale*. However he was much loved and missed when he died. At the time the dapper, brisk Percy Spalding looked after the finances. Warner also sat on the board and the fourth member was Windus's remarried widow, Mrs Tozer. They met daily upstairs for dinner, often with the genial, witty, self-engrossed and exasperating Gollancz in attendance. In this environment Swinnerton spent his days reading proofs, dealing with authors and printers, listening to stories, filling in gaps in his Elizabethan knowledge by reading proofs of the King's and the Shakespeare Classics. He would go home worn out but contented with the nature of his work.

He now lived at 4 Great James Street. Since returning to England from Paris the family had always been on the move. This was because his mother had a tendency to blame their lodgings for her unhappiness at the time. When Swinnerton joined Chatto he was living in his twelfth home,³ the arrival there having been an eventful experience with the removal men falling through the floor with the family piano. Having spent so many years in what were then the villages of North London, Swinnerton was once again happy to sleep to the rediscovered old familiar noises of the city. His father had been dead for seven years and Philip was now twenty-seven and in regular employment selling his comic drawings on which he worked all day in the boys' shared bedroom before

spending his evenings at various artists' clubs. Swinnerton remembered him at this time as a lean, olive-skinned, untidy and carefree man, a good mimic with an artistic temperament. Swinnerton was the counter-balance, the steady, neat brother. As there was no room for two in the bedroom, Swinnerton worked at the corner of the table in the living room, which was at the back of the house and dominated by green furnishings. There were regular gatherings of an evening, which epitomised innocent fun - the young people chatting freely, laughing, singing, sitting on the floor - and this would provide subject matter for his early works. Rose would join in and provide supper. She was fifty years old, her financial troubles had been eased somewhat and she was proud of her talented sons, whose prospects were good.

Against this background Swinnerton began to write a novel, which reflected his lifestyle and experience. He had been writing for fun for many years, a play at school, an amateur magazine. His first novel in 1902, *As Things Fall Out* was destroyed, and a second, *Bertram*, met the same fate. *The Real Way* was about a middle-aged dreamer who lost his young wife to a livelier companion. It was full of allusion and quotations but he submitted it to Fisher Unwin in 1904 and the reader's report was severe but promising. Warner had seen the work and had encouraged Swinnerton to continue writing. Many evenings were spent composing for pleasure with no special aim in mind. When in 1908 Fisher Unwin offered £100 for the best first novel, Swinnerton submitted his and although it reached a high place among the possibles, it did not win. He was about to destroy it when Warner asked him what he was working on. He took away the manuscript and returned it

with two reports both of which, whilst pointing out its flaws, considered it worth publishing. On the eve of Swinnerton's twenty-fourth birthday in August 1908 Chatto agreed to publish it and the young author was thrilled.

His first published novel *The Merry Heart* appeared in February 1909 and had a good reception. It is an adventure story without depth of characterisation or the wisdom which would typify his later works, and is written with considerable immaturity. The lives of the Lockery family are exposed, the absentee father, the dissatisfied mother who, with her daughter, Fanny, becomes involved with the suffragette movement to escape the monotony of her life. Charles Lockery, the son, is burdened with resolving the problems which arise. His friend, Thomas Dickens is in love with Fanny, but is repelled by her increasingly strong feminist views, and Lockery is in love with his fellow office worker, Margaret Marsden. Herbert Mallows represents the evil counter-balance to Lockery's chivalrous nature. He entices Fanny from home and marries her, whilst indulging in blackmail, dubious business dealings and rape. Lockery's attempts to help are paralleled by Mallow's efforts to ruin the very lives Lockery is intent on saving. Action moves swiftly in this novel. The style is simple, the fairly complex plot well thought out and all the characters, though not particularly well drawn, interact well together. There is no emphasis on inner thoughts and feelings and only Mallows and Lockerby leave any imprint of their character on the book. There is a sense of superficiality about the work and, at times, the dated language makes the exact meaning difficult to understand for the modern reader. Although Swinnerton often denied that he used

his own experiences in his novels, he inserted into this book aspects of his own life at the time: his love of Gilbert and Sullivan; a scene describing the public lectures he often attended; and office life. Perhaps by the standards of 1908 this novel may have seemed as promising as the positive reaction suggested, but from a distance of eighty years the lack of depth and vision makes this an exceedingly unmemorable book.

Swinerton's friends were scathing about it, but it received praise from Basil de Selincourt in *The Manchester Guardian*, a critical review from *The Globe*, while *The Academy* wrote that the book 'reproduced, with an accuracy little less than amazing, the manners and habits of speech of lower middle-class society'.⁴ Writing in 1918 C S Evans noted: 'It has high spirits and spontaneity, and several exquisite little studies of character etched with a lightness of touch. There are no finer studies in modern literature of the pre-war, middle-class, averagely cultured, gently cynical man'.⁵ Blair Rouse⁶ wrote 'It is not so much a narrative as a revelation of the central character.'⁷ Swinerton was pleased with the reviews, ignoring the criticism, because praise came for the areas to which he had paid special attention: characterisation, atmosphere and the background. Even Hugh Walpole read and reread it with pleasure as he informed Swinerton in a letter to him on 20 July 1918. Smith's took the book and although it sold slowly seven hundred copies were bought at six shillings, one hundred below break even point.

Against the background of a secure job and a financially easier home life Swinerton was encouraged to commence a second novel. In 1910 he was on the threshold of joining the London

literary scene as he began to make contacts and to establish himself and his work.

Chapter 5

THE CHATTO YEARS 1910 - 1913

On his return from a holiday in France with his mother, Swinnerton found the flat in St James's partly demolished and so the family moved back to Highgate, to a flea-infested property. He began to keep a diary, which recorded his movements, the books he read, such as Merivale, Carlyle, Bennett and McCarthy, the people with whom he dined, the cultural events he attended. He also noted his blossoming friendship with Ada Cundall and the completion of his novel *The Young Idea*. Chatto accepted it on 20 April, published it on 1 September and he was offered a £20 advance on account of 15% royalties for the next one, *The Casement*. In 1910 a young author could expect some fifty reviews in the various British literary journals and newspapers and his, according to his autobiography, were 'superlative': 'Extraordinary talent ... brilliant psychologist', 'more original and convincing than anything we can remember of its kind', 'full of character and original observation'. Swinnerton himself considered the notices extravagant for what he believed to be an indifferent work of fiction.

However, It is a better and deeper work than its predecessor in its development of a single theme, that of youth and the idea that youth's talent is worn out by the trials of life and that age brings wisdom to replace youthful zeal. Galbraith is the young hero, full of this 'Young Idea'. Because he is his mother's sole support, he feels restricted in his ability to pursue this dream. He loves his neighbour, Hilda Verren, who in turn is loved by a work colleague, the caddish bully, Percy Temperton, who forces his

unwanted attentions on her. Both men compete for Hilda's hand - a similar situation to that encountered in *The Merry Heart*. Other similarities are the descriptions of office life and Swinnerton's support for the independence of women. The difference is in the attempt at characterisation, especially in the creation of Galbraith, where his nature, his beliefs and his ability to cope with life are assessed. There are also flashes of mature and talented writing, which lift the novel and give promise of greater achievement. Sales were comparable to Swinnerton's first novel, but more importantly it drew attention from Martin Secker and J B Pinker. The former, newly set up in the publishing world, saw Swinnerton's promise and asked him to write a critical study of George Gissing for a proposed series of literary monographs, whilst Pinker offered him a contract for more novels for US publication.

At the time of the novel's publication Swinnerton was recommended Bennett's *Clayhanger* by a colleague, who saw a similar kind of humour in it to Swinnerton's own. He enjoyed it and in an attempt to express his admiration he sent Bennett a copy of *The Young Idea* with a note: 'Having read several of your novels, I think you ought to read one of mine'.² The rudeness of the letter was designed to avoid a snub. He had simply desired to inform Bennett of his existence. The famous author was amused not only by the letter but also by the Staffordshire connection³ and sent a postcard of acknowledgement prior to a two page letter, in which Bennett praised the book's artistic merit, its fineness and originality. He likened it to the work of Henry James and labelled

it profound.⁴ An invitation to lunch followed, to take place during Bennett's next visit to London from his home in Paris.

Although Swinnerton had once found himself sitting in the row in front of Bennett at a talk Wells had given on the contemporary novel, this was their first formal meeting and a nervous Swinnerton presented himself at the Authors' Club at the same time as another visitor arrived. This lady had mistaken the date of her invitation and had come a week early. After her departure both men were embarrassed by the incident with Bennett out of humour and the meal began badly. Bennett's stammer was more pronounced as a result of his recent discomfortⁱ and Swinnerton rejected compliments about his work. Both men parted with some misgivings, Swinnerton felt uncomfortable with Bennett's outspokenness, whilst the latter felt cool about this average young man, with his reddish hair, lively eyes and English reserve. However Bennett wrote long, encouraging letters to Swinnerton over the next three years.

During the second half of 1910 Swinnerton concentrated on his new novel, taking a two week break in Ireland, where he indulged in his favourite simple pursuits : walking, reading, travelling and idleness. This was a single peaceful interlude in an otherwise busy life. By 1911 he felt comfortable with his work at Chatto, having refused an offer of employment from Sidgwick and Jackson. He believed he was ideally suited to the role of reader because of his easy-going temperament, his dislike of the limelight and his increasingly wide knowledge of literature. Yet despite his dislike of the spotlight, he became increasingly involved with the literary world. 'Almost without my own volition ... [I have]

become one of the boys of the town. W L George went so far as to write an article in which he listed Mackenzie, Walpole, Cannan, Forster, J D Beresford and myself as the male white hopes of the hour'.⁵ But he kept a sense of perspective and did not believe his own publicity nor, with the exception of Bennett, did he ever approach his seniors or contemporaries. He was unambitious and did not seek fame, as a result of which all his acquaintances were made when others took the initiative. Consequently, although he knew many well-known people, others, equally well-known, were absent from his circle. 'Unless a man took the trouble to approach me and enter either into correspondence or conversation, I missed knowing him altogether ... As punishment, I never saw Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Joseph Conrad or D H Lawrence, I should like to have done so ... because these men ... interested me particularly and aroused my curiosity'.⁶ Of this list only Conrad wrote to Swinnerton on two occasions. The others probably did not know of his existence.

His life had become hectic and his essential idleness found the pace difficult to cope with. When not socialising, he wrote fiction in his own sitting-room, at the same time reading the entire works of Gissing in preparation for the promised critical biography. Very little has been written about *The Casement*, which appeared during 1911. Swinnerton does not refer to it in his autobiography, nor in any of the available correspondence. Yet it is the first of his works to reveal the style which was to become his trademark. It is set in the country, where many of his best novels will take place. Fewer characters allow for a more developed characterisation. The protagonists are older, more

mature and have greater depth. For the first time we encounter Swinnerton's tenets: the sense of gentleness and strength; the idea that life's problems can be solved by goodness and selflessness rather than headstrong action; the psychological approach to the solution of a triangular love situation. There are also the beginnings of a structured framework in which each chapter is self-contained and the whole divided into 'books'. Swinnerton would continue to use this format even after such a formal device became unfashionable. Literary devices, such as two simultaneous scenes interlinked in a chapter, are also given experimental treatment.

Events force the four main characters into an emotional situation, for which they must find a solution if harmony is to be restored. Robert Burton, a timber dealer, introduces his new partner, Paul Trevell, into his household, ignorant of the fact that his wife, Olivia, had once loved him. His arrival rekindles old feelings and memories. Olivia's younger sister, Loraine, has lived with the Burtons for three years and her sheltered existence has kept life at a distance, as real only as the view from her casement window. Initially resentful of Paul because of his past relationship with her sister, Loraine finds herself falling in love with him. The gentle atmosphere claims the reader's attention immediately and the opening scenes are superb. However, Swinnerton is unable to sustain the momentum and whilst the question of the resolution of the emotions remains interesting, the book soon grows trivial with inconsequential dialogue and manipulated scenes. Yet, writing in 1922, Reginald B Johnson stated: 'I doubt if Mr Swinnerton has ever achieved quite so satisfying, and

artistic, a triumph as this finished storyette: of characters absolutely individual, yet so ingeniously contrived for the exposition of an idea'.⁷

Whilst *The Casement* was being promoted Swinnerton was already writing his next two works, his novel *The Happy Family* and the criticism of Gissing, both of which were well advanced as 1912 approached. That year was difficult emotionally because his growing affection for Ada was beginning to cause friction with his mother. After twenty-seven years at home Swinnerton was experiencing the desire to participate more fully in the life which was opening up for him. But his mother was growing difficult and argumentative with the effects of the menopause and her disapproval of Ada, to whom Swinnerton, after an increasingly intense courtship, had become engaged and Swinnerton's love for his mother made him unable to leave. A crisis arose on 19 March 1912 when he spoke at length to his mother about the situation, but he continued to see Ada throughout the year and followed her to Bournemouth in July for a holiday. The climax came on 27 January 1913 when Ada's mother died and three days later the engagement was broken off. Correspondence continued over the next two years until the episode was brought to a close as a result of Ada's engagement to another man on 18 July 1914 and Swinnerton's return of her letters.⁸ In May 1912 Swinnerton sent his mother to rest in a nursing home in Brighton and on her return another house move was undertaken to Muswell Hill in August, where Swinnerton would look after her until the end of the War in 1918.

The Happy Family was completed in January 1912 and was published on 29 August to a multitude of reviews.⁹ It is a

forgettable novel which, nevertheless, has some interesting indications of Swinnerton's growing strength as a novelist. In his autobiography he considered it 'a long and ambitious novel of suburban life ... which I now believe to have been a bit on the dull side'.¹⁰ It is an examination of the virtues and vices of family life as epitomised in the Amerson and Dennett households, the former being an example of uncaring parents producing an uncongenial atmosphere, which interferes with the attempts of their five children to find happiness. The Dennetts on the other hand provide a stable, loving home, which brings strength to their wise daughter Edie and their son Roger, the hero of the novel. This simplistic idea is emphasised as the storyline traces the adventures of Mary Amerson and Roger Dennett through their weaknesses - Mary's attachment to the neurotic Septimus Bright and Roger's infatuation with Bright's self-assured, but selfish sister, Viola - until their inner strengths allow them to face their problems. In the Swinnerton tradition they triumph over adversity and find happiness together.

The story is more complex than the previous novels with a larger selection of minor characters and an increased emphasis on dialogue, which causes the main psychological thrust to be obscured at times. Swinnerton's portrayal of women is more successful than that of his men and this would hold true for most of his future work. Here he expands his examination of women's role in a changing society. Roger's work in the printing and publishing field allows Swinnerton to call on his own experience for authentic detail, even recalling genuine events at Dent's when he sends the young clerk Jerard to fetch lunch for his seniors.

Swinerton uses the novel as a medium to expound his cynical views of the book trade, publishers, authors and booksellers, and he portrays well the fear that clerks had of instant dismissal. As with all his novels, good, portrayed here by the Dennetts, will overcome the evil of the uncaring Amerson and Bright households. His increasing use of psychological insight allows a better characterisation and consequently a better understanding of the motives of the leading players.

Bennett liked the book and in an appreciation of Swinerton written in 1917 he suggested that it marked a new stage of development: 'It has some really piquant scenes, and it revealed that minute knowledge of middle-class life in the nearer suburbs of London, and that disturbing insight into the hearts and brains of quite unfashionable girls, which are two of his principal gifts'.' This was the first of six novels to be published by Methuen and also the first to be released in the USA; it brought him to the attention of Katherine Mansfield, who reviewed it for *The Manchester Guardian*.

Swinerton's critical study of Gissing was published on 17 October 1912. Armed with only his own opinion, he was concerned that the work lacked substance, and he would be unable to add very much to what had already been written by Thomas Seccombe in his preface to *The House of Cobwebs*. But all his attempts to talk to people who had known Gissing, which included Wells, to whom Bennett had supplied an introduction, proved fruitless. Published at the same time was a thinly disguised appreciation in novel form by Morley Roberts, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* and both books were reviewed together. Swinerton was praised for his

discretion, especially when compared with the revelations of Roberts's work. The discretion had been ignorance. He told Roy Plomley when selecting his *Desert Island Discs*² that since he had found it difficult to find material about Gissing's private life, he had simply made it up using his instinctive reaction to the known facts.

Written in an informal style, conveying the suggestion that it is just a personal opinion, the book is short and examines Gissing's philosophies and talents as a writer. The biographical section is a sketch, but is used to show how Gissing's life influenced his writings. Because of his own rejection of his experience of squalor, Gissing created his characters' poverty from the mind, not from the imagination, and so they became sterile and unconvincing. Swinnerton then looks at Gissing's treatment of the lower classes, his view of Dickens, studies in temperament, the influence of Greece and Italy, and finally style. He believes that Gissing is not a first rate writer, that he overdrew and over-explained his characters. The short stories he rejects as short novels without the 'dramatic quality [which] is implicit in most effective short stories - either in the sense of surprise, or unexpectedness, or conflict, or incident'.³ However, he is more complimentary about Gissing's understanding of Dickens's essential nature, and the enthusiasm which he brought to his travel book *By the Ionian Sea*. When Swinnerton examines Gissing's quality as an author he reveals his own view on the subject: 'The novelist's business is the exploration of human nature'.⁴

George Gissing: A Critical Study enhanced Swinnerton's reputation in that it showed his promise and led to him being considered a professional writer and it attracted many reviews.¹⁶ Wells wrote 'There is an admirable story of his life and work by Frank Swinnerton, so good that it would be officious and impertinent for me to parallel it, however briefly, here'.¹⁶ The quality of the criticism kindled Wells's curiosity and Swinnerton was invited to supper in December 1912 and another friendship began. Wells's enthusiasm also infected John Middleton Murry, who wrote to Swinnerton in November asking him to tea at the flat in Chancery Lane which he shared with his wife Katherine Mansfield. At the time Murry was editing a journal called *Rhythm*, which had begun in the summer of 1911 as a quarterly publication. It featured art, music and literature, and co-editors were Katherine and Michael T H Sadler. Malcolm Bradbury wrote in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1968¹⁷ that it was the original 'Little Magazine' created in the wake of a new mood of literary and artistic euphoria, committed to artistic change, partly as a result of the Post-Impressionist Exhibition staged by Robert Fry at the Grafton Galleries. Murry and Sadler had been undergraduates at the time and had promised a journal full of optimism, revolutionary spirit and a positive attempt at new techniques. At first the emphasis had been on art, but as Mansfield's influence began to be felt the literary input increased and a Russian influence superseded the French. She had been writing for *The New Age*, which she now abandoned in order to contribute Chekhovian-like short stories and reviews for *Rhythm*.

By the summer of 1912 the journal had run into debt and Katherine's publisher, Stephen Swift, took it over and produced it as a monthly until November, when bankruptcy forced him to leave the country. Secker stepped in and persuaded literary figures to contribute in order to improve the circulation. Murry wrote the criticism, Katherine the short stories, poems came from Harold Monro, W H Davies and Rupert Brooke, and D H Lawrence made one of his first appearances with an article on the Georgians. As a result of his introduction into the Murry household, Swinnerton contributed a short piece. On 8 March 1913 a ceremonial dinner at the Cheshire Cheese inaugurated a new title, *The Blue Review* and a new format. Murry announced he would become the literary editor, Albert Rothenstein would look after the art side, and monthly contributions would come from Gilbert Cannan (theatre), Hugh Walpole (novels), Lawrence (German literature) and Swinnerton (English literature). Other pieces were to be written by W H Davies, J D Beresford, Rupert Brooke, Walter de la Mare, John Drinkwater, James Stephens and Lascelles Abercrombie. Cannan, Walpole and Swinnerton would be sub-editors and the affectations of *Rhythm* would be shed. The journal was 'established "on co-operative principles", a number of writers pledging themselves to contribute without payment for nine months, at the end of which time, a profit-sharing scheme comes into operation'.¹⁰ Ten issues of *Rhythm* had appeared before the first issue of *The Blue Review* in May 1913. Yet despite the enthusiasm, the input of the best known literary figures of the day, its growing stature as a serious literary vehicle, which showed Mansfield at her best, and

good and dramatic literary reviews, only three issues came out and it folded in July 1913.

Swinerton was enchanted by Mansfield. Although she had been dogged by illness and was neither powerful nor quick of mind, he found her the most mentally attractive woman he had met. He remembered her as charmingly remote, tender and unreal and had an affectionate respect for her. With the collapse of the journal he heard no more from the Murrys until after the War, when Murry took over the editorship of the *Athenaeum* in 1919 and his involvement was requested.

Swinerton's writing commitments were being stretched to the full. He had begun his next novel *On the Staircase* on 24 October 1912, had promised Secker a book on Robert Louis Stevenson in the wake of the success of the one on Gissing and he was contributing book reviews to the *Bookman*. He read avidly, both modern works and classics, and his only respites were two short holidays in 1913, a week in Brighton in June and a second in the Lake District and Yorkshire in August. But he was happiest with a pile of manuscripts waiting to be read, anticipating the discovery of one worth publishing. When Warner had left Chatto in 1909 Swinerton had been given his vacated room to be shared with Geoffrey Whitworth, an Oxford graduate slightly older than Swinerton, who was easy going, enjoyed good living, and was a pillar of the Church and Conservatism. He was keen on drama and introduced Swinerton to the theatre of Chekhov. Though dissimilar they became friends, respecting each other's particular abilities: Whitworth had contacts, which provided many manuscripts, whilst Swinerton had an ability to assess talent. Some of their

successes were Clive Bell's book on Art, Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, Roger Fry's *Vision and Design*, and Gilbert Chesterton's *Short History of England*, and through a casual meeting with Edward Garnett at a party, Swinnerton managed to secure his wife's translations of Chekhov's tales.

Whitworth and Swinnerton planned their work together. Neither would put forward an idea for a book or scheme if he could not enlist the other's support when it was presented to Percy Spalding who, as senior partner, held overall control. Every manuscript was read until it was clear it was worthless, which might take just a few pages or almost the whole length of the work. Only about one percent of unsolicited manuscripts was accepted. Because Warner had left behind a distrust amongst the senior staff, Swinnerton and Whitworth were cautious with their recommendations until they had built up trust and confidence in the partners. As Spalding appeared to be more interested in finance than in literature, the two men enjoyed great freedom until a change of directors was made after the War. However, they did not accept any work of which Spalding would have disapproved, asking authors to alter works where appropriate. They protected Spalding from what they perceived to be exploitation of his innocence. Swinnerton was fond of this kindly, decent man, whose good nature, sensitivity and sentimentality made him popular, and it was his presence which was the prime factor in Swinnerton's enjoyment of his work at Chatto.

Chapter 6

THE CHATTO YEARS 1914 - 1917

By 1914 Swinnerton had added photography, attendance at football matches and membership of the Quill Club to his regular commitments. It was during a protracted visit from the USA of his Aunt Kate, which had upset the balance and routine of the household, that Swinnerton had completed work on *On the Staircase*. When published on 5 March 1914 it was so well received that it was shortlisted for the best novel of 1914 along with works such as Conrad's *Chance*, Robert Tressall's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, Wells's *The World Set Free*, and Walpole's *The Duchess of Wrexhe*. *On the Staircase* spotlights the Gretton family, a moderately comfortably-off couple and their three children, one of whom, Barbara, a strong-willed typist sets her will against that of her admirer, the far-sighted twenty-seven year old Joseph Amberley. He strikes up a friendship with Adrian Velancourt, a sensitive, poor and unworldly young man who works at the solicitor's office situated on the first floor of the building in which the Grettons reside. Velancourt courts and marries Cissie Jenkins, the wayward daughter of his landlady. Swinnerton admitted in his autobiography that he had modelled Velancourt on Gissing, following his detailed examination of the man in his recent critical biography. Swinnerton himself represents Amberley. His aim is to contrast the two temperaments of the leading male players and to follow through their instinctive reactions to a logical conclusion.

As with his previous novels Swinnerton pursues the independence of women, yet here he reacts against extremism with a

negative comparison between the modern woman and her traditional sister: Amberley's suffragist sister, Susan, contrasts badly with Barbara Gretton's independent, yet more traditional attitude to life. He writes in the novel that 'The Feminist Movement, being an assertion of claims and an allegation of wrongs, lacks humility, and is therefore spiritually damnable'.' Swinnerton also develops here his introspective style with more space being given to describing the thoughts of his characters and their development as they experience events. Action is increasingly becoming simply an outside force, necessary to affect the emotional progression of the characters. Although there is no superficial resemblance between the writing styles and approaches of Virginia Woolf and Swinnerton, their preoccupation with the inner workings of their main characters bears more than a passing likeness.

The Times review² emphasises the Gissing influence especially in that Swinnerton, like Gissing, uses clever, educated lower middle-class characters as his heroes. Swinnerton was regularly supposed to have been influenced by Gissing, though he always denied this. The people he wrote about - those whose position in life was not clearly defined - were the very ones with whom he felt most at ease and he was concerned only with their self-development, which was not stereotyped, but depended more on their individual natures. As his own 'class' changed, and he mixed more with a literary milieu, so his characters would change and moneyed upper middle-classes, actors, writers and artists would appear as his heroes and heroines. However, the background would always remain incidental to the reactions and sufferings of his characters.

The Times criticised the book's construction, disliking the development of two storylines, the courtships of Amberley and Velancourt. This was also Walpole's criticism when he wrote to Swinnerton for the first time after being impressed with it.³ He found it a 'fine piece of work ... [which] has given me the most extraordinary sense of charm and beauty - a charm which is utterly your own secret'. *The Scotsman* echoed the opinions of many critics with its comment 'an intensive and realistic study of conditions of life and thought and types of mind ... produced under the ... restricting influences that envelop the cheap flat in ... London. ... Swinnerton pursues a well-beaten trail through a once neglected region of the commonplace'.⁴ *The Globe* wrote: 'The whole thing is quite extraordinarily rich in humour. It is an object-lesson in the power of little things to move the emotions if they are observed with complete understanding and described with complete sincerity'.⁵ Swinnerton summed up his own attitude to his lack of tragic vision of his down-trodden characters in the comment 'one does not pity what one wholly understands'. A retrospective article in *The New York Times* in 1923 comments that 'it is a study of temperament. It reveals careful reflection and close observation of humanity, its reactions, its fears, its beauty. Throughout the book there is an atmosphere of poetry, of beauty, of sentiment'.⁶ Dedicated to Philip Lee Warner, *On the Staircase* was Swinnerton's most successful and best novel to date. It moved Bennett to write 'There is something in your new novel that makes me want to see you again',⁷ and a subsequent lunch heralded the progress of the friendship.

R A Scott-James had written one of the best reviews of Swinnerton's study of Gissing in *The Nation*. Swinnerton remembered this when in 1914 Scott-James started a journal *The New Weekly* and he wrote to him asking to be allowed to contribute the occasional piece. In the event Swinnerton contributed to every issue.⁹ He also wrote several reviews for St John Adcock's *The Bookman* that year, and thus continued to build up a reputation as a feature writer in literary journals. In preparation for his work on Robert Louis Stevenson, he spent the Spring and Summer of 1914 reading the Scotsman's entire published output and before the end of the year the criticism was written and published. It is a negative assessment, a quite biting dismissal of Stevenson's work and attracted a severe reaction from the critics. 'They denounced me. They said I was horrible ... Sir Sydney Colvin exclaimed that I was not worthy to do something which I find quite unmentionable in print. But none of these objectors ignored the book, which was very good ... and it was allowed for some years to affect critical opinion upon Stevenson'.¹⁰ The latter statement was echoed by Bennett who, on two occasions whilst writing for *The Evening Standard* commented that Swinnerton had done permanent damage to Stevenson's reputation, such being the power of his critical reviews.¹¹

Swinnerton could not understand the magnitude of Stevenson's reputation. His study has little praise of any aspect of Stevenson's life. Written with a similar construction to the Gissing work, Swinnerton begins with a biographical chapter and then devotes each subsequent one to a different aspect of his writing. His view of Stevenson is that he was a vain and

egotistical man with pedestrian perceptions and a lack of grasp of character. He dismissed juvenilia, essays and poems. Swinnerton displays a strong confidence in his own critical judgement when stating that with the exception of Burns, the Scots are too sentimental and emotional to make great poets. The plays fare no better. To Swinnerton they are insincere, short on drama and honesty and the characters lack realism. The novels are just long stories and only *Weir of Hermiston* has any merit. The travel works receive a lukewarm reception, but his short stories find praise, as being the best medium to display Stevenson's talents. Swinnerton elevates five'' to rest in the ranks of the best ever written. Though he allows that Stevenson's style is graceful and his writing lucid, he denies this versatile and prolific writer any qualities of innovation or originality and concludes that his status is overrated, as nothing he wrote was first class.

Secker seemed to have no qualms about publishing this controversial work. He had known Swinnerton since 1912 and by 1914 they were good friends. His real name was Klinginder, and Garfield Howe had introduced them when Howe and Secker had been working together at Ashe's, where Secker was a sub-editor. He received a legacy of £1000, with which he set up in business. One of his first ventures was the publication of Compton Mackenzie's *The Passionate Elopement* in 1911, which he had been forced to turn down whilst at Ashe's. Swinnerton had a high regard for this talented publisher, who soon had Walpole, Cannan, the Brett Youngs and Oliver Onions on his books. He advertised his writers to good effect by concentrating effort on a single promotion for each work, going against the trend at the time. About once a week he

and Swinnerton would meet at Gatti's or Monico's for lunch and in the war years Cannan would join them, as occasionally would Viola Meynell, her brother Francis, Raphael Sabatini and Francis Brett Young. After the War P P Howe would become a regular diner. The metamorphosis of Swinnerton, who had once felt more comfortable in tea shops, was complete. Secker was best man at Swinnerton's first wedding (to Helen Dircks), and as the years passed Swinnerton was a regular visitor to Secker's home in Iver, Buckinghamshire, whilst Secker and his wife spent weekends at Old Tokefield, Swinnerton's country home after 1926. The pattern altered only when Secker became blind in old age and found travelling difficult and when he died in 1978 Swinnerton missed him acutely.

1914 was a year of travel. In June he attended the Leipzig Book Fair and saw Berlin and Dresden. Two weeks of solitude followed in August when he visited Yorkshire to walk and read. A weekend on Bennett's yacht was followed by an invitation to Bennett's home in October. He visited P P Howe at his home in Lewes. For forty years Percival Presland Howe was Swinnerton's closest friend. He was born into a cultured, middle-class household, one of eight children. Howe and Swinnerton would often talk into the night, Swinnerton 'abominably profuse',¹² whilst Howe was alert, wary and spoke without haste. In a lifetime of exceptional friendships Swinnerton never liked anyone more. During the 1914 - 1918 war they did not meet, but once Howe was demobbed he obtained work with Secker and became so engrossed with the works of Hazlitt that he was considered the authority, producing *The Life of William Hazlitt* to which Swinnerton wrote the introduction.

Financially Swinnerton was feeling secure enough to invest in shares in November. But his circumstances changed with the declaration of war on 4 August, even if he were excited by the news at the time. He also became seriously ill towards the end of the year. Tonsillitis in October had given way to a kidney infection (Haematuria and Albuminuria) in November and throughout the Winter he was bedridden. He had an operation, spent time in Brighton convalescing, then early in 1915 his condition became aggravated by neuralgia. The idle, incapacitated months took their toll. He had a very unpleasant argument in February with his good friends, the Yeomans, regarding the Belgians and the War, which alienated him from their household for a while. He had little urge to write and for long periods little was created. The war had affected the publishing trade and although Swinnerton had signed a new contract in 1914 with Methuen for four more novels, he found they were not wanted.

As he came through his illness, now sporting a red beard, an eye infection in June 1915 set him back slightly. He started his new novel in April, but lack of inspiration stopped work. A quiet Spring and Summer with his friends Howe and Bennett culminated in a Brighton holiday in July. Feeling stronger towards the end of August he picked up his pen again and worked steadily on *The Chaste Wife* throughout the Winter and it was completed in May 1916. As he had no publisher, Secker offered to take it and it was published on 31 August of that year. It was the novel of a sick man and Swinnerton knew it had little literary merit.

Priscilla Evendine marries Stephen Moore. They are both deeply in love, but the relationship becomes complicated and strained by

Stephen's misguided idea of how to treat his wife. Unable to see her as an equal, he fails to recognise her purity of spirit, her trusting nature and total love for him, until a dramatic climax brings him to his senses. A liaison with Minnie Bayley, his wife's temptation by Hilary Badoureau, and his evil, meddling father, all add their weight to the development of Stephen's morose and tormented personality. The single highlight of the novel is Swinnerton's sensitive and beautiful portrayal of love. He 'gets very near the heart of the matter between man and woman; the essential contrast of attitude which, once bridged, will give strength to both'.¹³ C S Evans considered it a failure, as it was 'too often overburdened with a ponderous psychology ... the very sureness and delicacy of his psychological analyses result very often in failure to present his vision as a whole'.¹⁴ However, it was the first of Swinnerton's novels to sell more than 1500 copies and a major outcome of its publication was that the literary editor of *The Manchester Guardian*, A N Monkhouse, was impressed by the literary and critical opinions expressed by Stephen and offered Swinnerton a post as literary critic in September 1916. Swinnerton accepted and his first review appeared on 22 September. Twenty-one critical appraisals of new novels were written during 1917 and Swinnerton was soon friendly enough with Monkhouse to visit him in Disley, Cheshire. Over the next few years he produced a review approximately once a month.

1916 was a quiet year. The family moved for the last time together on 8 May to 33 Ravenscroft Road, Barnet. Philip married, was called up and was unhappy in the army. Swinnerton himself was summoned during February 1916 and appeared before a tribunal in

March. He did not play an active part in the war, his exemption was possibly because of his responsibilities as sole provider for a widowed and increasingly ailing mother, or possibly because of his record of illness and poor sight. Life progressed routinely. He was a regular visitor to the Wells and Bennett households and was often seen in London restaurants. His voluminous correspondence included letters from Walpole, Wheldon, Pinker, Secker, C A Miles and Methuen. A relaxing holiday was spent with his mother in Brighton in July, whilst a second one in October was spent at home composing his reviews for *The Manchester Guardian*. His only references to the war in his diary were comments on the zeppelin raids which he would watch at night when they disturbed his sleep.

By the end of 1916 Rose Swinnerton became too ill to be left alone. She remained in the care of the charlady in the mornings but Swinnerton had to come home in the afternoons armed with his manuscripts and he would subsequently work from home. (Reading University holds complete archives of these reports and also correspondence of the firm.) From 1915 all of his reports are preserved. Often they consist of a few lines, only rarely do they exceed one and a half pages. If he were unsure he would ask Whitworth for a second opinion. Major titles were given to both readers to evaluate. But Percy Spalding had the final say and he would underline salient comments in red before noting the date of rejection of a manuscript. The majority arrived either from the author or from an agency. They were all marked with a sequential number in pencil with relevant correspondence attached. During the war a decision to publish was influenced by the lack of money

available, which affected publicity and sales. Swinnerton showed his familiarity with the publishing houses as when a book had merit, but was not Chatto material, he would recommend another publisher more suited to the type of book under consideration. Between January 1915 and August 1920, 3130 reports were written by Swinnerton and Whitworth. Making a rough estimate from the figures and comments on reports, approximately 10% seemed to have been accepted, most offers being 10% royalties for the first 1000 sold then 15% thereafter. Bennett gives a good picture of Swinnerton at work:

He reads manuscripts ... He refuses manuscripts ... He tells authors what they ought to do and ought not to do. He is marvellously and terribly particular and fussy about the format of the books issued by the firm. Questions as to fonts of type, width of margins, disposition of title-pages ... really do interest him. And misprints - especially when he has read the proofs himself - give him neuralgia and even worse afflictions. Indeed he is the ideal publisher for an author.¹⁶

When Swinnerton had completed his manuscript quota he would do the housework and then, in the evening, he would write his new novel. This was *Nocturne*, the book for which he is best remembered and about which so much has been written by so many. Yet at the time this overrated novella had a slow start. It was conceived during a lunch in 1916 when book themes had been the topic of discussion between Swinnerton, Secker and Nigel de Gray, a Heinemann employee. The latter wondered why nobody had written a

novel describing the events of a single day. Secker suggested that if Swinnerton could write such a novel, under Methuen's contract length, he would publish it. Begun on 31 December 1916, during a miserable time for Swinnerton, when he needed money for house repairs, especially frozen pipes, he wrote only in the evenings and weekends, reading passages to his mother until she fell asleep. With a two week break because of lack of inspiration, it was completed on 8 April 1917 and published two months later on 28 June. The title posed a problem. Swinnerton had always referred to it as 'Nocturne', but had a mind to retitile it 'Night Piece'. When asked, Sabatini preferred 'Nocturne', but Bennett suggested 'In the Night'. Secker accepted Bennett's suggestion and changed all the left-hand headlines throughout the book at some expense. Unfortunately at this moment a thriller was published entitled *In the Night*, so Secker, at further expense, reverted to 'Nocturne'. Because Secker had to leave London for several months at the time of its publication, only a small advert appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*. Reviews were generally lukewarm and only Wells, writing in *The Daily News* praised it. It gradually sold out of its first edition of 1500 copies and because of Secker's continued absence, remained out of print for a year. It was reprinted then because of a small but persistent demand.

In the USA its promotion was masterly. Pinker, Swinnerton's agent, persuaded Doran, who was wary because of poor sales of Swinnerton's last three novels, to take it by agreeing to accept an advance of £50 instead of the usual £75. Sales were assured because of Wells's excellent preface and Bennett's extravagant personal sketch of the author, which appeared at the same time.

10,000 copies were sold within a few weeks of publication and Swinnerton became famous, paving the way for his two lecture tours. By 1934 50,000 copies had sold in the USA. Once reprinted in the UK it sold a steady 1000 copies until 1934, became widely translated⁶, was dramatised for radio by Bruce Montague and heard on 10 November 1975. Film rights were bought by an American company, but the film never appeared. When Secker was experiencing financial difficulties he sold the business to Warburg, who let the book go out of print. When Baker took over years later he reprinted it and when he died the rights were sold to the Balfour Press, who remaindered it. In 1937 it had been published in the 'World Classics' series by Oxford University Press and they reissued it in paperback in 1986.

The content of this 50,000 word story is not worth its bestseller status. There are five players, two sisters, the self-absorbed Jenny and the domesticated Emmy, their invalid father, to whom the sisters are tied, and their young men, Alf and Keith. Events take place between six pm and early morning, when both girls are given a glimpse of freedom, but only one can apparently take hold of it. The dilemma is which is the more worthy and which of the two men deserves to win. What little action occurs between constant dialogue takes place on a yacht moored in the Thames, a yacht bearing a strong resemblance to Bennett's *Velsa*, which was Swinnerton's only experience of nautical matters.

Yet his friends praised the book highly. Walpole wrote 'The book is quite beautiful - your best so far and one of the best by any one in recent years ... it seems to me to thrill with emotion from the beginning to the end and the whole scene in the yacht is

magnificent'.¹⁷ Bennett said '*Nocturne* moved H G Wells to an extraordinary enthusiasm, and I remember Wells saying to me: "You know, Arnold, he achieves a perfection in *Nocturne* that you and I never get within streets of" ... You can say what you like about *Nocturne*, but you cannot say that on its own scale it is not perfect, consummate'.¹⁸ Wells gushed:

His people are not splashes of appearance, but living minds. Jenny and Emmy ... are imaginative creatures so complete. ... The fickle Alf is one of the most perfect Cockneys. ... If there exists a better writing of vulgar lovemaking, so base, so honest, so touchingly mean and so touchingly full of the craving for happiness than this, I do not know of it.¹⁹

Swinnerton disliked the fuss made of the book, because he knew that it was a product of technique, not art. He called it a 'stunt' book in his autobiography, and he detested 'stunt' books. In order to redress the balance, with typical modesty, Swinnerton quotes in its entirety a letter from George Bernard Shaw, which calls it 'a damned dismal book' and Swinnerton 'a discouraged man discouraging other people ... a wretched artist, with only one subject. But you are probably worth insulting. That is the object of this tonic letter. Look round a bit and let yourself rip'.²⁰

Chapter 7

THE CHATTO YEARS 1918 - 1919

The end of the war coincided with a period of accelerated activity for Swinnerton. In his autobiography he looks back on this period with amazement at his ability to assimilate the demands on his time:

For five days a week I was a publisher, reading manuscripts, preparing advertisements, overseeing production of the books for which I was responsible, and carrying on an immense business correspondence. At nights and through weekends, besides leading a very active social life, I was a writer. The *Manchester Guardian* sent me more books for review, George Doran, my American publisher, demanded a monthly "literary letter" for the *American Bookman*, which he had taken over and which he ran for eight or nine years.'

R A Bennett, the editor of *Truth* employed him as dramatic critic and H W Massingham invited him to write for the *Nation*, which he did for about two years. In addition he wrote short stories, occasional articles, an anonymous book for Secker's amusement and read good books for his own entertainment. The popularity of his books in the USA brought a great deal of mail. Friendships with Wells, Bennett, Howe, Walpole, Secker, the St John Irvines and George Doran took up time, as did his growing relationship with Helen Dircks, and still he found time to learn French at the Berlitz School in London. Swinnerton was famous and was now entering a literary and social peak period.

The novel he produced in 1918 was *Shops and Houses*, which had been begun in September 1917, with the provisional title of 'Relations'. A month later the first efforts were destroyed and with its final title decided upon, he worked systematically on it throughout the turn of the year and completed it on 26 February 1918. It was published on 10 October 1918 to reviews from *The Times Literary Supplement* and *The Express*.² For the first time Swinnerton moves away from London for his setting to a typically provincial town, which he names Beckwith, with its social hierarchy, led by the Vechantor family, its small town snobbishness, its town gossip, Miss Lempe, exquisitely portrayed by the author. These factors are allowed free rein when a poor cousin of the Vechantors returns to the town as a shopkeeper and unleashes by this action the whole range of baser human feeling hiding behind the facade of the town: vindictiveness, snobbery, gossip and scandal. The Vechantor's son, Louis, is the only character who cannot understand why society must ostracise his poor relations and he finds himself championing the shopkeeper and becoming involved with his daughter, Dorothy. Louis and Dorothy expose the cruelty of a society, which reacts to any disturbance to the proper order of things. It is 'a community spending its time in a venomous search for the weakness of other people, watching, envying, scratching'.³ The only solution is for the poor relations to leave the town, but not before Louis and Dorothy offer hope for the future as they are destined to marry and rise above its meanness and pettiness.

Under the heading of 'Honest Fiction', Virginia Woolf offered a good review of *Shops and Houses*⁴ where she dwelled at length on

the vulgarity of Beckwith and allowed that Swinnerton had portrayed his town exceptionally well. She saw him 'among the group of honest observers of contemporary life who filter their impressions sedulously and uncompromisingly through the intellect and suffer nothing to pass save what possesses meaning and solidity'.⁵ However, she felt that Louis and Dorothy, the representatives of sincerity and humanity, failed the reader. 'Those scenes which should show us the honesty and energy of life removed from the burden of false convention are the weakest of the book'. She doubted that the reader would be able to convince himself that these young people could take on a social system and overcome it. Nevertheless, she concluded that it was 'a most valuable book'. Swinnerton had doubts. He wrote to Walpole: 'Shops and Houses is now in type. It has been read by one person, who is not ecstatic, but though the book is poor it is less conspicuously silly than I feared. It is pretty bad, though'.⁶ Yet Bennett felt 'this book shows marked development on the part of the author. ... The plot is very happily worked out. ... In fact it is an individual contribution; and the emotional quality is at least equal to the invention. The whole thing decidedly more mature'.⁷ Bennett's judgement is correct. It is the most accomplished novel to date as it moves away from all the preceding works, not only in its setting, but also in its theme and vision. Swinnerton displays new ideas and is no longer reworking old ones. A nice touch is seeing only Louis's point of view in the first half of the work and only Dorothy's in the remainder. The book sold 2000 copies within a month. First and second reprints sold out and a third was

on the presses before Christmas. In total 5000 copies were sold in the UK and 20,000 in the USA.

Published almost concurrently was a short anonymous essay called *Women*. On one of Swinnerton's visits to Secker's home in Buckinghamshire, the two men had been discussing the subject of women and their own experience of them. Secker was so amused by Swinnerton's comments that he suggested they should be written down and in 1918 Swinnerton did so. Secker published the slight volume in September and 1000 copies were sold. Knopf published it in the USA, paying a courtesy royalty, and it proved so popular that a second edition appeared in November 1919 and several thousand copies were sold. 'The book contains a few good jokes, and is written with verve; but it was never intended as more than a squib and is now appropriately forgotten'.⁹ This was Swinnerton's comment on the work and he was taken aback when a long and abusive review by Lady Frances Balfour appeared in *The Weekly Despatch* on 29 September. It is easy to feel some sympathy with the lady, as the content, divided into five chapters, each describing a different aspect of womanhood, is vindictive, demeaning, superior and bordering on misogyny.

The role of women after the war in 1918 had changed and Swinnerton examines their new restlessness, taste for power and dissatisfaction. He shows no understanding of women's feelings and thoughts, preferring to launch a biting denunciation of the whole sex. 'All women are egotists and mostly egomaniacs (self complacent, self-confident, seeing everything in relation to oneself). A woman cannot be disinterested: vanity is the key to their hearts'⁹ is a typical comment. He goes on to use words such

as mediocre, inferior, helpless, worthless and useless in his descriptions of them and is even more scathing of the 'new women': 'They are ungracious in their manner of accepting courtesy from any person who respects their physical inferiority', 'One cannot as a man, treat a woman as an intellectual equal', 'The war continues because the women of all nations are living bathed in its reality', and 'They may yet learn the bitter truth that without men they are sterile'.¹⁰ All these are statements which are bound to offend. On Secker's advice, Swinnerton declared authorship. It may indeed have been a bit of nonsense and written mostly in fun and not intended to give offence. But one is left wondering whether there was an element of fear of the new post-war social order, which threatened Swinnerton's late-Victorian perceptions?

Other matters were also demanding Swinnerton's attention. He had been asked for biographical details for *Who's Who*, his mother had spent much of the year away from London resting, as she was becoming increasingly frail, and Swinnerton concluded that it was time he lived alone and he began making enquiries. Mrs Desmond McCarthy, aware of his search, found herself in conversation with Bertrand Russell one day and mentioned Swinnerton's predicament. Russell immediately offered his studio at 5 Fitzroy Street and on 2 December 1918 Swinnerton became his tenant. It was 'a grimy building with a repulsive communal water-closet'¹¹ Fortunately it was sold almost exactly a year later and Swinnerton was offered another of Russell's properties, a flat in Russell Chambers, Bury Street, Bloomsbury, which was handsomely furnished but dusty.¹² He remained under Russell's roof for five years, and although they

were never intimate friends, their relationship was friendly and amicable. His only holiday that year was a trip to Blackpool and the North of England in June and his weekend relaxation was taken at the homes of Bennett, Wells, and Secker, where the two men could be found playing evenly-matched games of chess.

Swinerton's income was much enhanced in the USA by the efforts of Doran, a wealthy, decisive and tactful Irish-Canadian. He enjoyed good living, good company, and had a flair for publishing to the extent that he had some of the best English writers on his books: Arnold Bennett, Somerset Maugham, Philip Gibbs, Hugh Walpole and now Frank Swinerton. Doran often came to London, where he surrounded himself with his favourite authors. In January 1919 he offered Swinerton £200 per annum for a monthly causerie and six articles for the *US Bookman*. At the same time Pinker had negotiated a new deal for Swinerton's UK books. Coming now to an end of his contract with Methuen, Swinerton was not keen to undertake more contract work, so he rejected the approach from Hutchinson with a £350 advance on a new novel. However, an increased offer of £500 proved too tempting, and he agreed to join Hutchinson after he had written *September* and *Coquette*, which would fulfill his Methuen commitment.

Before commencing on his heavy workload, which included articles for *The Manchester Guardian* (book reviews), *Truth* (causeries and criticisms of plays, which forced him to be in constant attendance at the theatre), and *The Daily Herald* (book reviews), Swinerton spent two weeks with Bennett at Thorpe le Soken, where he was able to relax. Bennett had a high regard for him and was an astute judge of his qualities. He considered

Swinnerton an accomplished raconteur, but only in the right circumstances where the secure atmosphere of his friends allowed him to blossom. He was an excellent mimic and merciless in his realistic portrayals, yet romantic at the same time. His infectious laugh endeared many people to him as did his easy-going nature and his contented observation of life, where human nature was accepted in all its guises and understood.¹³

Swinnerton's circle grew with his election to the Reform Club on 29 March. As Bennett had just recommended several people, he felt unable to propose him and asked Sir Algernon Methuen to do so. Although Swinnerton had been on Methuen's books for some years this was one of only two occasions they met, the first being a farewell dinner in Swinnerton's honour when he left for Hutchinson. His first lunch took place on 4 April and the Club would be part of his routine even after he had left London in 1924. He came to know many men, in particular Vivian Phillipps, Lord Rhayader, T E Page, George Whale, the former MP Walter Roch, Arthur Clutton-Brock, W H R Rivers, H W Massingham, Clifford Sharp, J A Spender, C F G Masterman and A G Gardiner (with whom Swinnerton had a heavy correspondence begun in 1925 when Gardiner was already over seventy. Each week they would lunch and share their love of cricket. The letters only stopped with Gardiner's death in 1946). Each of these men is enlarged upon in Swinnerton's *Autobiography*. Another cricket lover, with whom Swinnerton struck up a friendship was Siegfried Sassoon, another Reform Club dinner companion. Sassoon regularly sent Swinnerton autographed copies of his privately printed poems and six were found in his library after his death and were considered by an antiquarian dealer to be

rarities. S N Behrman, a friend of Sassoon's wrote to Swinnerton from New York in 1964 that Sassoon would speak of Swinnerton with particular affection. They exchanged letters until Sassoon's death in 1967.

September was begun on 10 February 1919 after Swinnerton had abandoned two attempts in 1918. After four and a half months of concentrated writing he was able to celebrate its completion with champagne.¹⁴ It was his most immediately successful novel to date, selling 4000 of its 6000 print run before the end of the year and in the USA 11,000 were sold in the first few months after publication in 1920.¹⁵ The reaction is justified. This is an excellent novel, showing the author in command of a subject with which he is most comfortable. Unconcerned with action or plot, Swinnerton takes this gentle novel through the deep feelings and shifting relationships of the two female protagonists, Cherry and Marian. The latter, still beautiful in her late thirties is no longer in love with her husband, Howard Forster, an ordinary country gentleman with means. Into the household come Nigel, young and impressionable, who falls in love with Marian, and Cherry, a twenty-two year old opportunist, who flirts with Howard before turning her attention to Nigel. These are the main players, whose actions in the drama are seen entirely from Marian's point of view. In mood and setting this book resembles *The Casement*, but is more mature. The development of the jealousy between Marian and Cherry is well controlled and the women work better than the men - Howard is commonplace and although charming and intelligent, Nigel is an unlikely candidate to inspire love in both women.

Press reaction was 'extended and respectful, but not eulogistic. Arnold praises very highly. James Stephens has suddenly broken out into a vehement declaration that I am the master of English Fiction'.¹⁶ Bennett was indeed fulsome in his praise:

This book is admirably conceived and just about perfectly constructed. ... The interest never slackens, and towards the close it gathers itself together as it should. The book is easily the author's best. ... Its general authenticity and distinction cannot be questioned. ... It is incomparably the best novel by an author under 40 that I have read since The Rainbow, and of course vastly superior to that in technical qualities.¹⁷

A friendly rivalry between Compton Mackenzie and Swinnerton over which of their novels¹⁸ would win the coveted review of the week column in *The Times Literary Supplement* was resolved when they appeared side by side.¹⁹ E M Forster objected to the heroine, but Walpole was effusive:

I was entirely held by it, thrilled from the first page to the last. Its excellent. ... The outstanding successes to my mind are Howard and Cherry. Cherry is wonderfully done - quite the best piece of character work you've brought off. Howard is so good because he is a type done a million times but you've made him new and yet true. Of course you've spent most of your time and affection over Marian and I'm not sure of her ... I think you've overanalyzed her.²⁰

The work is indeed extremely analytical, but these psychological novels are Swinnerton's most enduring and show his talents of perception and understanding at their best. The post-war world is well observed and changing times and views are well reflected.

Virginia Woolf gave it her critical attention. Of Swinnerton as a novelist she writes 'His is a lucid rather than a beautiful mind, intellectual in its scope, rather than imaginative'.²¹ Of *September* she comments:

Among modern novelists very few could choose to make the fruit of the contest something so quiet and, until we give it a second look, so ordinary as the power which Marian Forster retrieved from the wreck of brighter hopes. ... We read with conviction that we are being asked to attend to a problem worth solving - a conviction so rare as by itself to prove that *September* is a novel of exceptional merit.²²

Swinnerton was always seemingly nonchalant about other people's opinions yet he was clearly pleased with *September's* success. 'It is the first book of mine that I have seen often in the streets, like a book by any other novelist' he wrote to Walpole on Christmas Eve 1919.

Swinnerton's final achievement of 1919 took place at work. He was approached by Margaret Mackenzie, a friend of Daisy Ashford, who offered him a manuscript written by Daisy when she was a child. Daisy would secretly read all the latest sentimental novels in her father's big house in Lewes when she was nine and she had written her own grown-up story in a red notebook. After the war

she had been going through her deceased mother's papers and had rediscovered the notebook. Swinnerton was charmed by the supremely comic story and was determined to publish it. He was afraid that it might be considered a fake and so approached J M Barrie for an opinion and when he praised it highly, he asked Barrie to write a preface, thus authenticating it. Barrie was a sick man and initially refused, but a personal visit from Swinnerton succeeded in changing his mind. In this way *The Young Visitors* was published in Spring 1919 with the original misspellings, the ambiguities of text and to speculation about the author's identity. Some believed Barrie wrote it himself, but Swinnerton vouched for its authenticity. It became Chatto's most successful production. They were unable to reprint fast enough to satisfy demand, especially in the USA, where it became a runaway success. Half a million copies had been sold by 1972 and several thousand are bought each year. It was Daisy Ashford's only success. She lived well on her royalties and very little was left of her fortune on her death in 1972.

Chapter 8

THE CHATTO YEARS 1920 - 1923

1920 brought changes in Swinnerton's living pattern. He was recommended a charlady, Mrs Sanders, by Mrs Boer, a friend of the Wells's. She would arrive daily after Swinnerton had left for work and would build up the fires, wash, sew and clean. All correspondence was by notes. Swinnerton was pleased with her honesty, humour, kindness and devotion. She neither lost nor broke anything and would bring him small presents from her travels round London. Her care and friendliness gave him much support and he felt indebted to her. In June Swinnerton negotiated with Spalding to alter his working pattern, so that he would only attend the office on three days and would take manuscripts home on the others. His pay was adjusted from £37.10.0d per month to £25 with quarterly retainers of £52.10.0d. This gave him more freedom to write and pursue his social interests, which included several holiays. In January he had sailed to Portugal with Bennett. In July he paid a visit to Countess Russell's Swiss home, travelling alone through Paris and Lausanne and arriving just after the last funicular had left, thus necessitating the last part of the journey to be made on foot. He was well received, walked in the lovely countryside with the congenial guests, amongst whom were his good friends, Festing Jones and the T J Cobden-Sandersons, wrote letters, lazed and began a new novel, *Coquette*. It was just over a year since he had completed *September* and it was only now that he turned his mind to novel writing again.

Only a month after his return from Switzerland, he set sail with Bennett on 1 September on a cruise of the South Coast from

Fowey to Dover, where he left on the 7th to dash to London to be married disastrously to Helen Dircks. The Swinnertons did not set up home together and he was left alone, hiding his emotional turmoil as he continued his bachelor existence. A friend, Dorothea, stood by him and although there does not seem to have been a deeper relationship other than friendship, 'he would often meet her and dine with her and she allowed him to stay at her home after the wedding fiasco. His social life peaked in 1920. Almost daily he had three social engagements - lunch, dinner, theatre. His weekends were spent at Secker's², with Bennett or Wells³ and on one visit to Easton Lodge in August, Wells asked him to act as trustee for Jane. He lunched with Aldous Huxley, dined at the Sitwells, where he mingled with Wyndham Lewis, T S Eliot, Iris Tree, Middleton Murry, Lady Ottoline Morrell, and he visited Monkhouse in Disley, Cheshire. A need to work further on *Coquette* sent him to Cornwall for four weeks in October.

His active life could also be seen in his writings. In 1920 Swinnerton published ninety articles in the UK and USA in journals such as the *New York Bookman*, *Nation*, *Truth*, *Athenaeum*, *John O'London's Weekly*, *Daily Herald*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Hutchinson's Magazine* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Appendix II gives a complete lists of articles and reviews for 1920 as an example of the nature of his literary output during his peak years. The sale of these articles augmented his income and regular cheques from Pinker totalled £1771 in 1920, which must have been a factor when Swinnerton reduced his working week with Chatto and began converting his larger royalties into shares. His income tax for 1920 came to £710.8.2d.

In 1921 Swinnerton travelled less, although he repeated the social activities of the previous year. With Bennett he went sailing. He could often be found at Easton Lodge at weekends⁴ and spent several days in Sidmouth with Jane Wells and Nora Ervine in February. He gave up his drama reviews for both *Truth* and *Nation* in March and subsequently frequented the theatre less. Helen had produced a car, which Swinnerton was left to pay for, insure and learn to drive. His first spin alone had been to Secker's in August. Then he drove to Barrow-on-Furness, where his friend Ursula Rowley lived, visiting Swynnerton in Staffordshire en route and making an unscheduled stop in Cheadle, Cheshire, where the car broke down with a cylinder problem. His mother returned to London to live in the Spring and set up home in Battersea where Swinnerton became a frequent visitor. He made his first will in August. He became involved as mediator with the Bennett's failing marriage. He earned £1794.15.8d, which was made up of his Chatto salary, royalties from *Pinker*, cheques from the *Manchester Guardian* and *Truth*, interest payments on his deposit account, and share payments. His tax demand was for £1004.1.7d.⁵

Coquette was finally completed in February 1921 after several months of intermittent writing and although the typescript was sent in immediately, there was a long delay before publication. Swinnerton was unhappy about it on two counts: its contents and the delay in its appearance. In the first instance he had not enjoyed writing it as is clear from a letter to Walpole in January 1921 'I am still plodding wearily on with my bloody novel. ... If I can only get this foul book finished I shall be like a lark. ... It's a hideous work, will be banned by the libraries, will have no

sale, and goodbye to me as a rising young nov. ... And I need the cash!'⁶ And in February: 'You will be glad to know that I finished my insufferably bloody novel last Monday. ... In my opinion it is one of the worst'.⁷ Its delay in publication was because his publisher was attempting to save money by buying plates from America instead of setting up in England. Thus time was lost sending proofs over for checking. There was also a question of publishing it in Canada first and so release dates were put back to 25 June in the USA and 1 September in the UK, which coincided with reviews in *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Times*.

The coquette of the title is Sally Minto, poor and plain, who is courted by Toby Tapping. Her father's death leaves Sally and her mother penniless and triggers her transformation from a nonentity to a strong, selfish, grasping, emotional beauty. She alters her appearance and finds work at Madame Gala's West End fashion house, where she gradually rises to power, especially when she realises Madame's sickly, spineless son, Gaga, has fallen in love with her. Toby has gone to sea and Sally sees power in a future with Gaga and marries him. She begins to see the weak and jealous nature of the man she has married just as Toby returns to claim her. Unable to decide between love and power she forces a climax where both Gaga and Toby are killed.

It is a strong book of human emotions and compressed power. However, after the gentleness of *September* with its autumnal, melancholic, country feel, this book is rambling, wordy, slow to climax, difficult to read, with characters who are unsympathetic and unrealistic, situations which are improbable and a denouement, which suggests that the author has tired of his creations and

wants to be finished with them. Yet Walpole read the book without a break and found it 'splendid'. He criticised the portrayal of Sally and the climax but went on to say:

What is so marvellous is the tenderness and dignity you get into these figures, even into Gaga. Toby of course is a masterpiece ... never a word out of place his actions natural and right from first to last. This corner of the world is known to you as to no one else now writing. ... It's a perfect crime to call it Coquette a silly title quite wrong for Sally, the title and the wrapper are enough to damn any book'.⁶

The final comment was typical for the era in which the book was written and today *Coquette* is dated. Yet Reginald B Johnson wrote of Sally, 'The mingling of shrewd egotism with the emotional impulses of a child is given its full, subtle effect' but that 'creative fire has just eluded [Swinerton]'.⁷ But it was a success. 15,000 copies were sold in the USA within six weeks of publication and it was much discussed.⁸ As a postscript, Bennett was also unhappy about the ending and in his work *Lillian*, published in 1922, he shows Swinerton what the appropriate end should have been.

In 1922 Swinerton's courtship of Mary Bennett, an employee at Chatto, was intensifying. He decided to fulfill his lifelong dream and buy a house in the country and to this end he instructed Golbie & Green and Geering & Colyer to send details of suitable properties in the home counties, and throughout the year he visited places as far apart as Bognor, Arundel, Maidstone, Rye and

Ashford in his search. In between he spent weekends with Wells'', a weekend in June at Compton Mackenzie's home in Guernsey, paid visits to Secker and the Clutton-Brocks, sailed with Bennett, kept up with his Reform Club colleagues and amongst his correspondence was a rare letter from Joseph Conrad. His only fiction was the completion of his latest novel whilst in Exeter in April and May to escape the interruptions of his friends and the distractions of decorators in his flat. Begun in November 1921 as 'Patricia', it became 'Spring Vintage', but had received its final title *The Three Lovers* by the time its 93,000 words were completed.

In July Swinnerton was ill and entered a nursing home at 198 Cromwell Road for three weeks. He went straight to Easton Lodge to convalesce for nine days and a month later could be found on Bennett's yacht with Alistair Tayler, reacting violently to the rough crossing to France. A quiet Autumn and Christmas at Secker's brought the year to a close. Financially Swinnerton had a good year which added to his increasing material sense of security, with a total income from royalties, articles, Chatto and dividends of over £2400. Added to that was £509.12.8d in a deposit account and £1300 invested in shares in bodies such as War Loan, Minerva Film Co., National War Bonds, City Association and Shell Transport.

The Three Lovers came out on 11 January 1923 through his new publisher, Hutchinson. Swinnerton rarely explained the ideas behind his work, but on this occasion he told Grant Overton:

The book is intended to show how different a man or woman is in his (her) own eyes from the creature imagined by others.

Therefore, each person in the book is supposed to be seen obliquely from the viewpoint of several others. The problem of the best sort of a man for the modern girl is indicated (not argued), and beyond all, I have tried to tell a story.¹²

The heroine is young, intelligent Patricia Quin who, alone in the world, finds herself caught up in the bohemian world of actors, artists and writers, three of whom fight for her love. These are the suave man-about-town, Monty Rosenberg, Harry Greenlees, at 30 a world-experienced journalist and traveller, and finally Edgar Mayne, a business colleague of Rosenberg, whose normal, warm-hearted family, of whom Patricia grows fond, is reflected in his nature. Initially dazzled by the promise of romance and freedom in this artistic circle, Patricia soon recognises its superficiality and has to come to terms with who she is and what she wants in life before she can make a choice of partner from her three suitors.

This fast-moving book begins well with the introduction of the complex relationships, gripping the reader immediately and compellingly. Once again the needs and rights of the modern woman are examined, with Edgar being their champion. The development of Patricia's character is expertly done, with simplicity, deftness, sympathy and frankness. We see her realise her selfishness, accept her failings and grow to maturity. It was well received as Bennett humourously commented. 'What amazes me in the reviews of your novel is the bloody benevolence of most of them. I would sooner see you slanged as H G and I are usually slanged'.¹³ Walpole did not consider it amongst Swinnerton's best. He felt parts of it

were unreal, hurried and careless and that Swinnerton was uncomfortable in his bohemian setting. But he thought the last twenty pages were masterly.¹⁴ These are excellently conceived, compelling to read and produce a denouement which is both satisfying and acceptable to the reader - a marked contrast to that of *Coquette*.

1923 brought Swinnerton his dream home in Cranleigh, the property of the painter, Lawson Wood. After he had taken Mary to see it he made an acceptable offer of £2350. He subsequently took a five week break alone in Beer, where he walked, read and began his next novel, initially called 'The Happy Hunter'. But solitude intensified his loneliness and a worried Bennett wrote to him on 1 February 1923 'I don't very much care for the atmosphere of your letter. ... I cannot believe that this solitude is really the right thing for you. In fact I am disturbed somewhat. I should say that one of the things you need down there is the society of a young woman.'

Back in London Swinnerton completed the purchase of Old Tokefield with a £1350 bank loan, moved in immediately and began to furnish it with pieces from Heal's. On 3 April Helen Dircks surprisingly asked for a divorce, which would allow him to end his loneliness and marry Mary. Meanwhile he began a new routine which involved long weekends in Cranleigh, with three days in London, which were crowded with lunches shared by his increasing friends and work at Chatto. He visited his mother, now installed in Nassington Road, Hampstead Heath, who was so crippled with arthritis that she was unable to write her daily letters to Swinnerton any longer. There were also occasional evenings with

Mary. At weekends his new world included housework, walking, reading and on Sunday afternoons he would watch cricket on the green from his front windows. Three weeks were spent at Old Tokefield in May so that he could finish his novel, now called *Young Felix* and on the 21st Bennett paid a visit with his new lover, Dorothy Cheston. With his novel completed on 15 June, Swinnerton began to revise his books on Gissing and Stevenson for the American market and in July he accepted an offer from Doran for six novels. In August, now secretly engaged to Mary, he took Italian lessons in preparation for his honeymoon the following Spring. On 28 September *Young Felix* was published.

Grant Overton had asked him about the origins of the novel. Swinnerton had replied that it had been conceived whilst he was finishing *Coquette* in Cornwall in 1921 as a reaction to 'a book so comparatively circumscribed as *Coquette* in its action and the number of characters involved'. He wanted now to 'write a huge great chronicle novel with lots of jokes and digressions'.¹⁶ He admitted that the early scenes and ending were autobiographical, but his aim had been to write about serious, tragic and squalid events, which would be lightened by the buoyant personality of the central character, Felix Hunter. Like Swinnerton, Felix grew up in straitened circumstances in a family of commercial engravers and artistic taste. Many of his specific experiences are retold. His own grandfather, brother, Aunt Kate appear in the story and there is no doubt that the tender courageous mother is a portrait of his own. He endows Felix with his own cleverness, cheerfulness, sensitivity, laziness and diphtheria, but once Felix becomes an artist the novel becomes pure fiction and traces his reactions to

the events in his long life. When his failed marriage to Estelle is chronicled, the autobiographical parallel reappears and when Mary Howard is introduced in the last few pages the reader has caught up with Swinnerton's own engagement to Mary Bennett.

It was his longest novel running to over 125,000 words but its 'chronicle' nature divests it of tension and therefore the impulse to read further. *The Manchester Guardian* review admired it for its 'imagination, sympathy, observation, and, above all, humour. ... The great success of the book is in the relations between Felix and his mother, herself an adorable creature'.¹⁶ The weakest character was considered by Walpole and reviewers to be the empty-headed, doll-like, unfaithful wife, Estelle. Felix himself was an enigma to some critics. S P B Mais wrote in *The Daily Graphic* on 1 October 1923:

Felix is so intricate that I cannot help feeling that Mr Swinnerton knows him in the flesh. ... I know no artist answering Felix's description. Doubtless nearly every reader ... will spot the original in a moment. ... In so far as the putting of a real person into the pages of a novel complicates the issue to such an extent as to destroy the harmony and the unity .

This is an interesting reaction to Swinnerton's only attempt at directly autobiographical creation. Whilst his close friends liked it, Walpole considered the novel 'unreal' and 'out of proportion' and on the whole reviewers in the U K agreed and sales were disappointing. In the USA its success was measured by an initial print run of 30,000 by Doran to meet the demand from the public

and the praise from reviewers, who considered it his best novel to date.

With the launch of *Young Felix* over, Swinnerton gave up his flat in Bury Street and moved his belongings to Cranleigh. He began to prepare for a lecture tour of the USA, before which he took a brief holiday at the beginning of November visiting Monkhouse in Disley and Ursula in Barrow-on-Furness. His US tour would close the door on a city existence filled with emotional stress and uncertainty and, at thirty-nine years old, a new life as a family man in the country would begin.

Chapter 9

THE TWO WIVES

Emotionally, the years between 1917 and 1924 were fraught ones for Swinnerton. As well as becoming a well-known literary figure, who was often seen not only in print but also in the company of the famous, he added a complicated and unsatisfactory love affair to his exceptionally busy life. C A Miles¹, a regular lunch companion brought a twenty-year old girl with him on 23 May 1917. A week later she was brought again to lunch and on this occasion Swinnerton presented her with a volume of Chekhov's works. On 26 September she came a third time and accompanied Swinnerton to the London Library after the meal. This was Helen Dircks and Swinnerton had already been aware of her existence when in 1916 she had submitted some poems to Chatto and Windus under the title *Stars on the Town*. She had received a rejection note from Whitworth, but only on the grounds that the collection was too slight to publish and that since the quality of the verses was good, she should write more poems and resubmit the expanded volume for reconsideration.² It had been Swinnerton who had reviewed the poems and his report had shown how charmed he was by them:

Poem after poem ripples out, and one cannot help smiling with pleasure at their cunning artlessness ... [the poems] are most delicately expressed with a pretty felicity of rhyming and extraordinary concentration of phrases that brings the fancy leaping into the reader's mind as quickly as lightning. I really like the verses very much indeed, and wish we could publish them. But the collection is small.

On 3 October 1917 Helen wrote to Swinnerton on the subject of her poems and after some correspondence she resubmitted them. Swinnerton was equally impressed with this selection and although he considered the range to be small he found the 'sober fantasy ... of the poems ... extremely attractive ... quite perfect in their fancy and their metrical skill'.³ Chatto took the book, retitled *Finding* and Helen was offered a 10% royalty on the published price of 1/- for a paper cover and 2/- in cloth up to 500 copies sold and 15% thereafter. The volume sold well as when a stocktake was undertaken in April 1925 only forty-four cloth copies remained. It contains fifty-nine poems, written in a variety of styles from rhyme to prose, which atmospherically and dreamily examine love, war, London and nature. They are well written and rather moving. It seems she had lost a lover in the war and she expresses her feelings through her vision of nature's beauty - sun, fallen autumn leaves, hills, trees and flowers.

Swinnerton was attracted to her and asked her to lunch at the Cottage restaurant on 20 November after which he sent a copy of her verses to Bennett and took her to Cannan's New Year party. Throughout 1918 the relationship progressed quickly. He began to take her to the Palladium, she visited him at home in Barnet, joined him for lunch with Jane Wells on 12 February and was introduced to Marguerite Bennett on the 20th. Swinnerton promoted her book by sending copies to his friends, among them Cannan, Walpole, Monkhouse and Edyth Goodall. But her unstable nature soon surfaced. On 16 March they had met at the Ship restaurant, where her father, William Henry Dircks, had been present. After tea at Monico's (a favourite restaurant of theirs) their day had

'concluded with a little explanation & farewell'.⁴ April passed without contact, but letters and lunches began again followed by a weekend at Easton Lodge with the Wellses. Swinnerton was introduced to Helen's grandmother and on 29 May he made his first visit to Helen's home in Ealing, where she lived with her father and grandmother.⁵

The relationship began to follow a pattern of very successful evenings followed by disastrous ones. He could not predict her moods, but their extremes were logged in his diary. After one visit to the Palladium, when a 'stormy & outspoken supper'⁶ had ensued, Swinnerton wrote her a poem entitled *The Safety Valve*. Then evenings would be noted as 'a tremendous success' and 'a slight scene at Hammersmith, which pleased me very much'.⁷ By August Swinnerton was in love. A wonderful weekend in Henley at the home of Helen's friend, Buntie MacBride, boating and picknicking resulted in the entry 'A beautiful day all day & a moonlit night, very clear. We stayed out very late on the river, reluctant to go indoors'.⁸ They were often together and Swinnerton dedicated *Shops and Houses* to her in October. On 18 November his diary showed that they had spent 'a wildly romantic evg, after which I saw her right home'. At this time Swinnerton had a good relationship with Helen's father, a publisher's reader, who had brought up his daughter single-handedly and she was devoted to him despite Swinnerton's contention that Dircks was 'an embittered sozzler'.⁹

Throughout 1919 their relationship followed a pattern of successful dates and times when Helen failed to appear and was unavailable when Swinnerton phoned. In the summer they began to

write a play together, called *September*, and on 8 September Swinnerton joined Helen and her father in Bognor Regis for a fortnight of work, bathing, walking, blackberrying, plays and films. Then in November Helen was introduced to Swinnerton's mother. Yet almost immediately she stood him up again claiming to be sick. When Swinnerton took grapes to her the next day, she had gone to a dance. Twelve days of acrimonious letters followed, which culminated in Helen breaking off the affair. Now Mr Dircks began corresponding with Swinnerton and although it is unclear which of them suggested a reconciliation, Swinnerton wrote a conciliatory note to Helen on 11 December and tentative links were reestablished.

During 1919 Swinnerton had met Mary Bennett who had begun to work for Chatto. She is first mentioned in May, when a diary entry notes that a visit was made to a lecture by Sir E Shackleton 'with Kobby & others'.¹⁰ During May and June he took her twice to the theatre. As 1920 dawned and his relationship with Helen continued to swing from happy moments to unsatisfactory meetings he intermittently dated Mary. During the time of Swinnerton's visit to Portugal with Bennett, Helen's second collection of poems, *Passenger* was published by Chatto, but she was obliged to waive the royalty for the first 500 copies sold, though she would received 10% thereafter. This volume included reviewers' comments on *Finding*. *The Daily Express* had considered her 'a poet with eyes that see, a heart that understands, and the power of individual and dainty expression', whilst *The Manchester Guardian* had assured her a place in literature in the future and had granted her 'a quick & subtle observation, and a mood that responds warmly to the

appeals around her. This means vitality in almost everything she writes'.

Passenger offers forty-one poems, three of which had previously been published in *The Nation*, *The Observer* and *Punch*. The subject range is even more limited, consisting mainly of a preoccupation with unrequited love. They relate to the same period of her life as *Finding* and there has been no growth or development in them. The poems are short, sentimental and still make use of nature to express feeling, but there is an absence of war imagery. Many of the sentiments expressed allude to mothers and children and a longing for sleep to bring release. The verses seem less balanced and more obscure. This volume did not sell as successfully as *Finding* and when all sales had ceased, 613 copies remained to be pulped.

When Swinnerton returned from Portugal he entered a tense period. Against a backdrop of his rising popularity, he lived an emotionally uncertain life, its stability depending on Helen's moods. However, on 17 May 1920 before a visit to Drury Lane to see Pavlova, Helen agreed to marry him. The next day Swinnerton took out a marriage licence and wrote to his mother, but Helen phoned during the evening and reneged on her promise. Disturbed, Swinnerton could not work and at the end of the month Helen broke off relations again. Her grandmother intervened and wrote to Swinnerton, but before he left in July to visit Lady Russell in Switzerland the situation remained unresolved. Throughout August Helen came to work on the play and Swinnerton took Mary out again.' Suddenly on 1 September Helen agreed to be married and Swinnerton immediately took out a second licence. He then left for

a short trip on Bennett's yacht, *Velsa*, to Brightlingsea. On 7 September Bennett wrote to his nephew 'Mr Swinnerton went ashore about 30 minutes ago for London. He is to be married today, and he has a very bad cold. In spite of all this he is quite cheerful'.¹²

Swinnerton arrived in London in time for lunch with Helen and the two witnesses, Martin Secker and Margaret Chorlton, a friend of Helen's. They were married at St Giles Register Office at 2.30 pm. He was 36 and she 23. They dined at the Savoy and spent the evening at the Pavilion and then returned to Swinnerton's flat in Bury Street. The next day he wrote letters and sent wires and was unprepared for Helen's arrival with news that she felt the marriage was a mistake. Always reticent over emotional matters, after this bombshell Swinnerton simply wrote in his diary on the 8th 'so I took to my bed'. When she came again the next day she demanded an annulment. Swinnerton believed that she had been primed to do so. In a letter to Colonel Ian Swinnerton of the Swinnerton Society, discussing lineage and ancestry, he is replying to a request to include Helen in his family tree for the sake of absolute correctness. He refuses on the grounds that his marriage 'lasted exactly one day' and that 'the young woman' had been 'a charming, intelligent, but unstable girl'. It appeared that whilst Dircks had urged Swinnerton not to abandon Helen because he was the only one who could do anything with her, he had in fact been jealous of Swinnerton and when he had discovered that she had married him in one of her moods, he had exerted his power over her and had rushed her home after visiting a solicitor to see if the marriage could be annulled.¹³ Helen Willans, Swinnerton's niece also recalls comments made by her parents that Helen had

left on the same day and that the marriage had not been consummated. Walpole had learnt of the marriage from a third party and wrote chastising Swinnerton for his reticence.¹⁴ In reply Swinnerton wrote:

The marriage had been hastily arranged, was to be kept entirely secret between us two and our witnesses, and we are not living together yet. We may never, as it happens, live together, so violently have my wife and her family been disturbed by this desperate act of hers. This latter fact is the reason why I have kept all dark.¹⁵

Swinnerton moved Helen's belongings out of his flat, visited her at her new home, 8 Cheyne Gardens, was summoned by Dircks on 9 October and saw a solicitor, Mr Withers of Withers & Co of 4 Arundel Street. Despite his emotional torment he outwardly continued to lead his old life, which included taking Mary out to dinner and plays. He began to write to her and his letters were filled with small talk, had a tendency to treat her childishly and were written in a private malaprop-style language to which only the two of them had the key. Quite suddenly Helen phoned on 6 December 1920 demanding to see him and at the subsequent lunch she agreed to come back. A tentative truce was called, Helen began to visit Bury Street and was given £100 for Christmas by Swinnerton, with which she bought a fur coat. There were signs that Helen wanted to become a proper wife but her instability was proving insurmountable. Dircks and Helen's grandmother kept up a correspondence with Swinnerton but there seemed to be no solution.

Helen arrived at Swinnerton's flat on 12 January meaning to stay, but collapsed and went home. On 25 April she stayed overnight after an evening out. The next few days were spent together and on the 30th they left for a few days to Pangbourne, where they stayed at the George. But it was a disaster with Helen making scenes, which continued at an evening with the Bennett's after a hasty return to London, and culminated in a row on 4 May.

Yet Helen was making an effort. She acquired a car for them on 10 May from the Museum garage. He describes the test drive to Richmond in 'Randy' in a letter to Walpole⁶ and speculates that owning a car would allow him to enjoy the countryside more. He also admits that his personal situation has disrupted his creative thought. 'I must start working again soon. It won't do to dally on from day to day as I'm doing, because this sort of thing eats up time and destroys the will'. Whilst Swinnerton arranged for a driving licence, insurance and to pay for the car (£321 2 9d), Helen acted as hostess on 12 May, but, true to form, departed after a scene on the following day. The diary entry for the 17th reads 'Helen phoned ... [she] didn't come home'. With this comment the last episode of the affair had been played out, despite a sporadic further correspondence. Helen would not live with Swinnerton, she appeared to be unable to obtain an annulment and yet would not divorce him as he had offered to let her do.

In 1921 he communicated with Helen just once although her grandmother wrote several times. Meanwhile his friendship with Mary was blossoming. On top of his evening dates with her they now went out for drives and walks. His letters were less formal and described his daily routines and the problems with his car and

they were no longer sent to Chatto, but to her home address at 67 Somerleyton Road, where she lived with her mother. When the latter fell ill in June, Swinnerton offered to contribute to a holiday for them in Lowestoft and to visit them there. Mary was a breath of normality in the time of madness through which he was passing. As he looked for a country home Mary came too and on one trip to Maidstone and Rye in February 1922 they spent the night away: 'I think we'll put you and Randy up at one hotel and I'll find another one for myself. This will save some bother and explanation - also your character!''⁷ When staying in Marine Cottage, Beer in South Devon in May whilst finishing *The Three Lovers* he wrote to her 'I wish you could be here - It's most lovely. The sea at the door, and cliffs and hill paths and places to eat. ... The one thing I need is companionship'.⁸ His novel completed on 22 May he sent for Mary, enclosed the £2 for the train fare and instructed her on the clothes she should bring. On the 26th he met her at Seaton and they drove back to London together at a leisurely pace over the next few days. Back home he bought her his first gift - a dress from Debenhams on 8 June. She visited him in hospital in July and after one visit on the 31st he recorded in his diary that it had been 'a red letter day'. He followed this up with a letter to her on 2 August in which he noted 'I'm feeling very happy since Monday evening'. It may be incorrect to assume that these comments can be attributed to a turning point in their relationship, as they may well refer to some aspect of his illness. However their relationship deepened.

Mary was with Swinnerton when he made an offer for Old Tokefield on 7 January 1923 and on their return journey his diary

admits to 'conversations en route'. In a letter to Mary on 6 February the meaning of this cryptic statement becomes clear. Swinnerton had been lonely despite his full social life and he had fallen in love with Mary, whose personality was refreshingly different from Helen's. But as Helen would not divorce him, he could not offer Mary marriage. In the 1920s there was still a stigma attached to divorce, which only the most indifferent could brush aside. If Swinnerton were to divorce Helen, which he had genuine grounds to do, it would appear that he had treated her badly and his reputation would subsequently suffer unjustly. He wanted Mary to live with him in Cranleigh, but the arrangement would necessarily have to be a clandestine one and Swinnerton recoiled from putting Mary into such an impossible position. Even if he were courageous and filed for divorce, he believed that the grounds that Helen refused to live with him would be insufficient. Only 'misconduct' (Swinnerton's word) would be acceptable and there was no evidence of that. If divorce proceedings were to be put into motion the process would likely take two years and would not solve the immediate problem.¹⁹ An impasse seemed to have been reached when Helen's letter arrived on 3 April 1923 asking for a divorce. He agreed and a hotel bill was sent by Helen as proof of adultery, and Swinnerton immediately consulted a solicitor to put proceedings into motion. On 14 April the divorce petition was signed and that evening he took Mary to see *Rats* at the Vaudeville, but unusually, they sat in the balcony and not the stalls. Already Swinnerton was becoming conscious that he would have to be circumspect publicly whilst the divorce was going

through. He expanded on this concern in a letter to Mary on 27 April:

After all, the K P won't shadow me; he'll only make enquiries, & perhaps he won't even make those. He'll ask the porter at Russell Chambers²⁰ and probably send somebody down to ask Mrs Watson & Brincklow²¹ - in fact I don't know what he'll do. But as we don't propose to do anything which would interfere with the course of justice I don't think we need terribly worry. I mean, we really ought to be able to go riding in Randy alone - at any rate, sometimes.

A waiting period had begun. They met infrequently, but always inconspicuously and he wrote each weekend. He became concerned that the whole business was making Mary unwell and he regularly exhorted her to take exercise and go out more. By the end of May his solicitor informed him that his case would be heard on the defended list. Swinnerton was assured that this simply meant that a barrister would be present in case anything reprehensible was said and that no defence would in fact be offered. Time began to drag and in each letter Swinnerton wrote of his expectations that the hearing would be soon and consequently a decree absolute would be through by Christmas and Mary would be able to stay at Old Tokefield for the festivities. Whilst they were unable to set a wedding date at the time they agreed to honeymoon in Italy and although she was unable to wear it publicly Mary had already been given a ring by Swinnerton for her birthday in July.

As it turned out the divorce hearing was not set until 31 July 1923 at 12.40 pm. In a letter to Walpole Swinnerton described the occasion. 'I was hurried to Horridge's court, but I was no sooner there than I was bundled [out] ... and the thing was done in 3 minutes'.²² Afterwards he lunched with Secker, and the only discordant note of the day was the fact that the case had been picked up by the evening papers. Still unable to see each other regularly, Swinnerton and Mary kept contact through letters. Because of the situation it became easy for doubts to grow and Swinnerton became concerned that Mary might be having second thoughts about getting married. Because of his previous experience it would seem natural that this particular anxiety should take hold of him. He simply needed reassurance. He was able to voice his fears in a letter dated 9 August. 'You see I've had one rather bitter experience and I don't want to risk a misunderstanding. It is very difficult for us to talk seriously, because in the last few months we haven't been much alone together'.

Now that the hearing was over Swinnerton was able to write more tenderly and express his feelings more forcibly. It was clear that he missed Mary and wished their enforced separation could be at an end. They began to plan their future together, decided that Mary should leave Chatto in January 1924, saying only that she was going to live in the country. The true explanation would prove rather awkward. Finances also were discussed. Swinnerton was trying to furnish the house completely and to provide enough income for them both to live comfortably at Cranleigh.

Swinnerton left for a lecture tour of the USA on 17 November 1923. He agreed to go for two reasons. Officially this three and a

half months' visit was at the instigation of his American publisher, George Doran who, with the help of a work colleague, Eugene Saxton, impressed upon Swinnerton that as Doran had made his name familiar to thousands of readers in America, he was morally obliged to consolidate his popularity. He would be treading a well-worn path already taken by writers such as Walpole. 'A Lecture tour ... was quite a usual thing to do at the time, for American readers were curious to see British authors'.²³ Privately he had consented because he felt it would help the time pass quickly so that he could be distracted from the waiting before he could marry Mary. He denied that any financial considerations had influenced his decision, although he commanded between \$100 and \$250 per engagement and he expected to fulfill a total of sixty.

Cunard had written very respectfully to Swinnerton to assure him of special attention on their ship, the *Berengaria*, which at 52,000 tons was one of the three largest ships afloat and boasted luxurious facilities. He had a calm crossing and enjoyed the company of Willa Cather, for whom he developed a high regard. He was amused by one man, unfamiliar with his profession, who asked him if he was a member of the Swinnerton pottery family, and also to see that the most popular books on board were *Antic Hay*, *The End of the House of Usher*, *The Cathedral*, and his own novels *Young Felix* and *The Three Lovers*. In New York he was met by Eugene Saxton and an almost impossibly busy schedule was immediately begun. Socially he was fought over, feted, taken to football matches, dinner clubs²⁴, theatres and on one occasion was introduced to Gloria Swanson, with whose beauty he was much taken.

He travelled all over the country and met the same inexhaustible hospitality everywhere, some of his hosts becoming lasting friends. His extraordinary adventures and amusing encounters would provide many happy memories. But the days spent travelling in cold and draughty trains and the hectic schedule made him ill with headaches, colds and earache, irritable and continually tired. He visited and spoke in New York, Georgia, Tennessee, Ohio, Michigan, Montana, Illinois, California, Oregon, Alabama, New Jersey, sometimes visiting these states on more than one occasion as different cities came up on his itinerary. He gave countless interviews to pushy reporters, which often went on all day but he praised their professionalism, accuracy and honesty in his autobiography and allowed that they produced interesting and positive articles about him, even if they ignored his pleas for some time to rest. His main complaint was that he was never allowed to rest between travelling, lectures and being entertained and he found the pace at which Americans lived exceedingly trying and impossible to adjust to.

The journalists portrayed him as a modest, unassuming man, unconscious of his own importance, 'whimsical' and 'frail looking'²⁵. He returned the compliment by praising America and the Americans. A good description of his appearance at the time was given by a Dallas newspaper, who saw him as:

an unaffected, amiable gentleman, middling tall with dark close-cropped hair that his forty years have begun to thin, and an abbreviated blond Van Dyke beard. He wears small nose glasses on a long prominent nose which suggests a strong curiosity about things

in general, but the quality of his smile is unequivocally friendly and winning. ... A striking thing about him is his hands, which are small, exceedingly well formed and sensitive.²⁶

He gave four lectures in rotation. These were 'Observation as a Fine Art', 'Current Tendencies in Fiction', 'Personalities of Modern Writers' and 'How a Novel is Written'. He filled New York's Town Hall with 1500 listeners on 2 December, where the handbill advertising his appearance introduced him as a man of 'triple roles of expert literary adviser, one of the ablest of the younger English novelists, and critic of decided importance as is evidenced by his two studies of Gissing and Stevenson'.²⁷ His qualifications as a lecturer are presented in his intimacy with English writers, and his insider knowledge of literary affairs, his observation of and closeness to current trends on both sides of the Atlantic. His lectures would draw from this background and would be 'extremely valuable for the comparison that he will make between the characteristics of American and English authors, the influences that are operating on both sides in moulding present day writing and the possibilities of the future'. In Atlanta he was introduced as 'one of the three greatest living authors'²⁸, in Knoxville 500 struggled through a blizzard to hear him speak. 1300 people turned out at the First Methodist Church in Jackson, his largest audience, but its size was because a churchman had denounced *Young Felix* as shocking.²⁹ In Urbana his first talk of the day had been so successful that his schoolroom venue had to be switched to the largest hall in the university in order to accommodate the crowd.

By January Swinnerton was exhausted. He was sick of book-signing sessions, the lack of solitude, his constant ill health, the over-full schedule, the bitter cold, lack of sleep, the fuss made of him and he had grown to hate the Great North West railway.³⁰ Most of all he longed to be home. He wrote regularly to Mary detailing his itinerary and counting down the days until his return. He was unable to give an exact date for his arrival home, but it was agreed that they would be married immediately and Mary would make all the arrangements. It must have been hard for her to cope with the separation, the arrangements for the wedding and honeymoon, her resignation from Chatto, all without moral support, but Swinnerton tried to guide and organise her and lift her spirits. His long letters became more personal as he expressed his hopes for their future together and his desire for her as his wife. His last act before boarding the *Berengaria* for his return trip on the 8 March 1924 was to visit Tiffany's in New York to buy a wedding ring. After six uneventful days Swinnerton sighted the Scilly Isles and wired Mary to expect him on time. He came ashore at 8.30 am on 15 March and by noon was taking his marriage vows in London with Mary's mother and a friend as witnesses. After lunch the couple retreated to Cranleigh for the weekend and only left the house for walks.

The honeymoon began at the Hotel Normandy in Paris from where the Swinnertons caught the sleeper to Italy and when they awoke the next morning they found themselves upon the edge of the Gulf of Genoa with the sea coming right up to the line and they lay watching the view until Pisa was reached. They stayed in Rome for twelve days at the Hotel des Princes and despite the poor weather

established a routine. In the mornings they visited the obligatory sights such as St Peter's, the Forum and Colosseum, the Vatican, the National Gallery of Modern Art and the Pantheon. In the afternoons they shopped and slept and after tea would often head for the Pincian Gardens overlooking the City, which became a favourite spot. Of an evening they took in a film and a piano recital, but mostly remained in the hotel writing letters, postcards and in Swinnerton's case a *Bookman* causerie. Before returning to England on 4 April 1924 they spent a few days in Paris enjoying the landmarks and the luxury of French elegance and superior cuisine.

As Frank and Mary Swinnerton settled down to their new life, Helen married the co-respondent, Ralph Eliot Gomme, a thirty-five year old bachelor civil servant on 22 March 1924. William Dircks had died leaving Helen free to pursue her moods. This marriage also ended in divorce approximately nine years later and sixteen years after that she contacted Swinnerton suggesting a clandestine meeting, which he declined. Family sources say that she ended her days in a mental institution in Eastbourne.

Chapter 10

THE CHATTO YEARS 1924 - 1925

Swinnerton was forty years old and was finally able to taste companionship and domesticity. He had always dreamt of having a cottage with books, a wife and a garden, and now he showed no desire to take up his former bachelor lifestyle. For three days each week he still went to work at Chatto's but these days were drawing to a close, and the desire to remain in his country cottage, living a rural existence, was becoming increasingly stronger.

Swinnerton would remain in this home for fifty-eight years until his death in 1982. In that time Cranleigh would change beyond recognition. Today it is a large village south east of Guildford, which boasts the nearest railway line to London. One wide main street is crowded with shops, with the church at the south end and the road widening to the village green to the north and then it runs out of the village towards Guildford. Overlooking the green and facing south is Old Tokefield, a slate half-timbered house behind tall hedges, made up of three small cottages which date from 1600. The original three staircases have been retained, so there is no connecting corridor to the four bedrooms upstairs. Two inglenook fireplaces, back to back, dominate the large sitting/dining room and the snug, smaller parlour. Mary's room, a bathroom and kitchen complete the downstairs accommodation. The house is full of old oak and has a homely feel. Swinnerton worked in Lawson Wood's studio, a detached wooden outbuilding at the back of the house, where he had two desks; he worked to the sound of squirrels scurrying across the roof and eventually filled the

shelved walls with 3500 books, some his choice, others presents, while a third collection comprised review books, which sometimes found their way to various organisations. The house stood in one acre of gardens: a formal cottage garden at the front with a pond, pathways, shrubs and flowers, which caught the morning and afternoon light. To the back was a massive lawn, which at first was given over to a tennis court, but later reverted to grass. The garden supplied all the family's fruit, vegetables and flowers. Lawson Wood had enjoyed converting the house and his architect, John D Clarke had perfected the interior, leaving Swinnerton only to add light and central heating.

As Londoners neither Swinnerton nor Mary knew much about nature or living amongst a village community, and whilst they were friendly with the neighbours, Swinnerton discouraged casual callers. He grew to love the garden, its birds and animals. Bogey, their first cat, a tailless black tom with a tremendous character soon arrived and was responsible for Swinnerton remarking once that he loved him better than most human beings. He inherited a housekeeper and gardener and the latter, of a similar age to Swinnerton, would work until his daily task was finished, despite the fact that Swinnerton had given him a watch so that he would know when his paid hours had come to an end, and when the Swinnertons were away, he would write with the very news they wanted to hear.

Floyd Dell and his wife spent a weekend at the cottage during these early, idyllic days and he described it as a 'mellow and kindly place, and a fitting background for such a mellow and kindly host'. They were wakened with a cup of tea and taken out

'while the dew was still on the grass, to inspect the flower gardens in front, containing every flower that England knows, the old orchards on each side of the house, and the rows of flourishing vegetables and the stretch of greensward in the back'.¹ In a local newsletter Swinnerton explained why he had chosen Cranleigh. The features which most pleased him were 'the church, the cricket field, the splendid row of maples extending from the cricket field to the shopping area, the prevailing scent of wood smoke, and the quietness. ... My wife and I ... were enchanted; and we walked every afternoon, unmolested by traffic ... blessing our stars that we had lighted upon such a lovely district. We could reach the village by train from Waterloo in an hour². ... This was the rural bliss we had dreamed of'.³ Heal's supplied the furnishings for Old Tokefield. They ranged from mahogany sideboards (at £23 10 0d) to cruets and butter dishes (4/9d and 3/9d). In May 1923 the invoice came to £274 13 3d.

Swinnerton was overwhelmed by the turn in his fortune. To Walpole he wrote 'I wish I had some money now, and I would complete the furnishing; but it will be done in a few months. ... I am most terrifically happy here, and walk about like a lord. My gardener takes off his cap to me. I have to force him to go home'.⁴ Bennett called Old Tokefield 'Swinnerton's rural wigwam',⁵ and described his first visit in a letter to his nephew. 'It is very nice and highly picturesque with an excellent garden, and he is beginning to furnish it with some taste, and he loves it. It wouldn't quite do for me, however; tiled floors, ancient hearths, non-heating, dampish, and I should say infernal in Winter. Further, I think he paid too much for it'.⁶⁷

The new pattern began. Swinnerton and Mary would go up to London on Tuesdays, where he would go to the office, lunch with Secker, Howe or Bennett. Then they would shop, spend the evenings with his mother or take in a play or concert. Weekends were lazy, filled with gardening, walking, cricket, writing and a steady stream of guests: Mary's mother, the Saxtons, the Kinnimonts, his brother, Bennett and other friends from Chatto. There were no holidays in 1924, nor visits to friends. In April he received a Swedish copy of *Coquette*, which must have been a satisfactory indication that his books were beginning to reach a wider audience and the prospect of a film of *Nocturne* was raised when Pinker sent a film rights agreement in May. *The Elder Sister* was begun on 25 April, destroyed and restarted and on Christmas Day he was still working on the plot because guests and other writing commitments had interfered with his concentration. Miscellaneous writings flowed regularly from his pen during the weekends² and these augmented his income to £3812 with £696 being retained in shares. He was maintaining a good income and this began to influence his decision to leave Chatto. His Chatto salary made up only about one eighth of his total monies and travelling to London on three days each week was not giving Swinnerton the domestic stability which he desired. Life at Cranleigh was very much a weekend event.

Early in 1925 both the Swinnertons were unwell. He gave a talk to the Cambridge Literary Club on 'Technique in the Novel', resigned from the Savile Club in March and after a concentrated effort completed *The Elder Sister* on 25 May. After each novel, and this one was no exception, he would indulge in his natural laziness and idle his time away. He visited the Seckers and

Wellses in June, entertained a string of weekend guests and wrote a handful of articles and short stories in the Summer.²

The Elder Sister, his thirteenth novel, was published on 18 September and became his most successful to date. It had been conceived whilst on honeymoon, when he had seen a man and two girls crossing the Piazza de l'Esedra and he transposed the scene to Vera and Anne Treacher walking across a London park with Mortimer, a bank clerk. The development of the plot shows the shifting relationship between the sisters and the man with whom they are both in love. Mortimer marries Anne, but is soon disillusioned with her apparent cold superiority and his inability to influence her and turns to the more vulnerable Vera, leaving Anne to become ill with neglect. When Vera becomes pregnant Anne is forced to face the reality of the betrayal and contemplate the future alone.

Each section presents the point of view of only one character. It is a difficult tactic to employ without leaving the reader impatient to establish the full picture in this emotional tangle. It is a simple story, with few characters and little action and concentrates to a large degree on the development of emotions rather than character. Vera is only allowed to be unhappy, tragic and extreme. Mortimer is extremely unpleasant and selfish and his initial attraction to Anne is suspect. She remains an enigma. It is interesting that the ending, where Anne at the last moment finds the strength to resolve her crisis and face the future, should be echoed by the main character in Swinnerton's next novel *Summer Storm*.

The Daily Express thought it his best work. 'It is in every way an admirable, and even brilliant, piece of work'. But the reviewer is critical of the absence of 'comic relief', the heavy treatment of the story holding back its ultimate success.¹⁰ Rouse agreed that it 'is so utterly devoid of humour as to come perilously close to dullness'.¹¹ *The Saturday Review of Literature* attributed its success to the serene objective tone without affectation in which he puts over his story.¹² In a major article the *New York Times* went as far as to call it a great novel, one 'that the personages who have paraded its pages live for the reader long after the book has been laid aside', compares parts of it with Henry James and Meredith and believes it 'is a narrative not likely soon to be surpassed'.¹³

Walpole was also absorbed by the novel and wrote that Swinnerton had created 'the most living group of figures you have ever presented me with', but was annoyed that the denouement, a mere ten pages, was an anticlimax and out of proportion with the rest of the plot. He also felt that Swinnerton had not given an adequate reason for Mortimer turning away from Anne so soon after their marriage.¹⁴ In defence Swinnerton countered that by the time the novel was drawing to a close he was exhausted. It had been a strain to write, he had found his own characters uninteresting and the fact that he could only write at weekends because of his London commitments, had caused him to lose interest in it.¹⁵

The novel had earned its advance of £500 by December and 15,000 copies were sold in the USA in three weeks. This news was heartening and lifted Swinnerton's spirits, which had been somewhat low as a result of an operation and stay at a nursing

home in the Cromwell Road, London in October. Although he had been visited daily by Mary and had received many callers and letters, he was pleased to return home and turn his mind to the problems of his dual existence, which was interfering with his craft. He made up his mind to leave Chatto and with both Mary's and Bennett's full support, he approached Percy Spalding on 17 November and formally resigned three days later. He left just before Christmas with a book from Spalding and a set of Chambers Encyclopaedia from the firm.

Only 20% of his income in 1925 had come from Chatto and Swinnerton felt he would be able to make up this amount from sales of articles in the USA.¹⁶ After eighteen years with the firm he no longer felt comfortable there. He had long contemplated leaving publishing and with Spalding's imminent retirement, the moment was right. He hated change and the decision caused him some anguish and he feared he would be unable to support his mother and his wife if his earning power should collapse. However, there was a compensation. 'My joy is of freedom. ... I doubt if you can realise the stupefied, doubting hesitation of one, liberated, who has been a prisoner for 28 out of his nearly 42 years. ... I still can't believe I'm out of the cage'.¹⁷

With his departure Swinnerton left behind the regular company of his numerous friends and colleagues. These included acquaintances he saw at parties such as E M Forster (with whom he also sat on the Reform Club committee), T S Eliot, George Bernard Shaw, Wyndham Lewis, P G Wodehouse and Edgar Wallace. There were also his elders, for example, Clement Miles, Vernon Lee, St John Adcock, Edwin Pugh (for whom Swinnerton was greatly instrumental

in obtaining a civil list pension), John Galsworthy (with whom Swinnerton was friendly but never intimate, there being some literary rivalry because of their different styles and taste), Henry Festing Jones, and President Masaryk (an avid fan of Swinnerton's work). Of his contemporaries he would see less of H M Tomlinson, E C Bentley, J D Beresford, Francis Brett Young, Gilbert Frankau, Stephen McKenna, A S M Hutchinson, Sinclair Lewis, Joseph Hergesheimer, Hulbert Footner, W J Turner, Robert Nichols, Osbert Sitwell, Aldous Huxley, L A G Strong and Henry Williamson (with whom Swinnerton's main correspondence lasted from 1932 to 1952). All these people's characters are enlarged upon in the pages of Swinnerton's *Autobiography* and often a brief note is made of his personal dealings with them.

Norah Hoult was also a friend from the London days and Swinnerton was extremely fond of her. She was fourteen years his junior and her lengthy letters to him are full of inconsequential chatter, as well as comments on Irish politics, her own work and critical appreciations of Swinnerton's. He made an effort to see her in London whenever she was over from Ireland and invited her to Old Tokefield. Their correspondence spanned their lifetimes but was most voluminous from 1930 to 1964. Hoult was an intermittent letter writer and always owed Swinnerton a reply. He, as was his habit, always replied to hers by return. She dedicated her work *House Under Mars* to him in 1946.

Swinnerton's post at Chatto went to Oliver Warner, and upon Spalding's retirement, Charles Prentice, Swinnerton's friend, filled his shoes. The firm changed direction under Prentice's shrewd, popular and generous guidance. Fresh standards became

apparent, the policy became forward looking. Prentice was a scholar and had a good taste in book design. In his influential years (1919 - 1934) Chatto maintained one of the most distinguished publications lists in London, both in content and appearance and many of Bloomsbury's illustrious names were now associated with them. John McDougall replaced Prentice in 1934 and worked with Harold Raymond and Ian Parsons. The company moved to William IV Street and periodicals began to be published again: *World Review*, *Geographical Magazine*, *Night and Day*. After the war McDougall left and was succeeded by Norah Smallwood. Before Chatto became a limited company in 1953 it injected finance into the Hogarth Press but left Leonard Woolf in charge. When Raymond retired in 1954, Peter Calvocoressi took over and since then the company has diversified into specialist fields. For many years takeovers were resisted, but in 1969 it merged with Jonathan Cape in an attempt to preserve its identity by forming a larger body.

Chapter 11

FREELANCE YEARS 1926 - 1932

'This is a house of complete irrelevancies. ... I don't know whether we're here or not. We live here in a kind of dream'.

After forty years of struggle, in which he exploited his talent and good fortune, this was how Swinnerton viewed his happiness and ability to control his life now he worked for himself. Throughout the rest of the decade he was much sought after by journalists and articles about him appeared regularly in newspapers and journals on both sides of the Atlantic. He also kept his name prominent by writing many short stories, articles and reviews during these years: for *The Manchester Guardian* (until November 1928); *The Evening News* (1922 - May 1945); *Publishers Weekly* (February 1929 - September 1961); *Harper's Bazar* (from 1927); *The Chicago Tribune* (from 1927); the London Letter in the *U S Bookman* (until 1927). He also published four novels and three works of non-fiction. Swinnerton was at his peak, popular and much sought after. Journalists arriving on his doorstep were surprised to find a 'robust, jolly fellow, looking a bit like Joseph Conrad with a sense of humour, or Pickwick with a brain, sitting there with his legs stretched out to the fire and idle hands, bursting with content'², when they had expected 'something remote, sardonic'³, an image built up from the contents of his novels. He always managed goodhumouredly to deflect questions about himself, but would happily talk about his writing. He considered himself a 'natural' writer and was unconcerned with the mechanics of writing, although he was a pedant as far as grammar and punctuation were concerned.⁴ He admitted that he had begun to

arrange his work systematically only recently, juggling his novel writing with his journalism. His family and friends preferred his articles, because they reflected his chatterbox character, whereas his novels were generally considered gloomy.

He worked after breakfast and again after lunch in his garden studio writing articles on the typewriter, but novels longhand. Whereas in the past he had made few corrections, he now felt the need to revise his work. He believed this was because his livelihood now depended on it. Whilst he enjoyed inventing plots, he had to force himself actually to write his novels. In the first months of his 'freelance years' he had worked out how he would organise his work:

I have been devoting myself to some articles and short stories, with the object of assuring myself a lengthy period of no financial cares. When this batch is done, assuming they sell for large prices, I shall have enough to live on all this year and some over. Then I can settle down to do a rather more ambitious novel, taking my time in the planning and in the execution. I expect this to occupy about a year.⁶

Not everyone was happy about this new way of life. 'So weeks go by, and AB [Arnold Bennett] gets restive in the country (which deprives him of my moral support), and my mother gets restive at staying in her nursing home'.⁶ Both of these people would be dead by the end of this period, taking away some of Swinnerton's happiness with life.

In his autobiography Swinnerton attempted to analyse what it was that made his writing unique. He listed the qualities in five points: because of his unconventional upbringing he was uninfluenced by conventions and had no time for them; he was not interested in politics. His only interest in any subject was the degree in which it illuminated human nature; dialectic did not entice him. He believed it to be a sign of exhibitionism and self-important intellectualism; he wrote solely for the reason that the lives of his characters, as ordinary people, interested him; finally, he never desired to uphold a 'dogma'. He had a sense of his own individualism, his own personal space and wanted to walk alone. He believed in freedom but not at other people's expense.⁷

Other analysts of his work repeatedly emphasised his realism. Ashley Belbin even headed his article in *The Writer* 'Frank Swinnerton: A Gentle Realist'. He believed that Swinnerton had 'a steady band of admirers' who would always buy his work and whose numbers were growing. 'There is even a danger that he may develop into a best seller'. He noted that Swinnerton's ambition at the time was to write a really good novel.⁸ Annie Russell Marble in her *Study of the Modern Novel* wrote 'We find his selection is narrow in setting and characters, as his own youth and maturity have been restricted in range and experience. The influence of the age shows in his ruthless realism and his psychological wisdom of the inner selves of his characters'.⁹ Earlier in the book she had, like many writers, compared his work with Gissing. 'The mode of subdued and rather seamy realism illustrated for the Victorians by George Gissing, was sustained, with uneven power by Frank Swinnerton, whose studies of lower-middle class life have veracity

and sincerity. Even if their restriction to mere representation limits their importance and attractiveness',¹⁰

St John Adcock added another dimension when discussing Swinnerton's natural realistic approach to life and those about him:

He is that sort of realist, too, in his novels. He does not set out ... to paint the world either all in a depressing brown or black, or all in a nice, attractive pink and white. He keeps within the limit of his own experiences, and pictures the world and its people frankly, unreservedly but systematically as he had known it and them. ... His work has often been compared with Gissing's, but the comparison is superficial; he deals with similar phases of London life, but in a very different spirit and from a different angle.'

Unlike many critics Adcock knew Swinnerton and in these lines he summed up Swinnerton's approach well. Swinnerton consistently denied that Gissing had influenced him. Whereas Gissing despised the poor people amongst whom he had been forced to live, Swinnerton never resented being one of them and as a result was able to see beneath the squalor and could pick out the inherent cheerfulness and optimism of this class. Gissing was morbidly self-centred and had little sense of humour, whilst Swinnerton built his life on his basic sense of security in himself and his optimistic approach to life.

U S writers also picked out this quality in his writing:

He looks at life without preconception and reports it without prejudice. He is not disappointed ... by the fact that human nature is not something other than it actually is. ... He is quite merciless in his analysis of human motives and human impulses and absolutely impartial in his portrayal of the conduct in which they are expressed.¹²

A French journalist not only commented on the realism but also brought out the empathy with youth shown in his work:

Swinnerton est réaliste parce qu'il ne craint pas la vérité des faits; il est moderne en ce sens qu'il regarde les difficultés en face; il est enfin créateur, son cabinet étant tout différent d'un atelier de photographie. Aussi a-t-il la force, la confiance et les espoirs d'un jeune: il ne méprise point la sagesse, consacrée par les âges, ni le bonheur véritable que l'âge nous apportera; il appartient à sons temps.¹³

It is a good point that Swinnerton had a feeling for the power, confidence and hopes of youth, as he did for the wisdom of age. Lloyd Morris also picks up this point in *The New York Tribune*:

If one looks to the old people ... for humour, one looks to the young for courage and gallantry and adventurousness in life. One of the explanations of the popularity of his books is Swinnerton's notable sympathy with youth. He excels in portraying its response to passion, to ambition and to duty. A number of his novels center

upon the conflict between these three motives, and they are usually represented as love, work and family.¹⁴

Swinnerton had promised Mary a holiday when they were first married, but because of pressure of work it was only now on 1 January 1926 that he was able to board the Blue Train to St Raphael and spend two months at the Hotel des Mimosas in the peaceful Mediterranean fishing village of Sainte Maxime. The hotel was well-placed amongst the multi-coloured villas and afforded a good view of the sea and the sunrise over the Gulf of St Tropez. Despite indulging in the usual relaxations which holidays demanded, he made a start on his new novel *Summer Storm*, which he told the *New York Post* he would endeavour to make less gloomy than his previous ones¹⁵ and prepared for a second lecture tour of the USA which Doran had arranged. He worked in the mornings and because of the changeable weather the evenings were mostly spent reading, often huddled over the radiator in their large, lofty room. They visited the Spaldings in Cannes and with the arrival of Hulbert Footner many hours were spent over cognac and coffee in cafes and the casino in the evenings.

After a month Mary was homesick and not even a gift of lemons from Blasco Ibanez's garden or the sight of Augustus John admiring a blue flowered shrub outside their hotel could assuage her boredom and dislike of the Germans and noisy British guests and the antics of the smart set. They left on 26 February. Their train was late, necessitating a diversion from Calais to Boulogne, which meant their arrival home was so delayed that they were forced to stay overnight at the Grosvenor Hotel, Victoria.

Once home they acquired some land at the back of the house and entertained Doran on 15 May. On 22 May Swinnerton completed *Summer Storm*. On 4 July they drove to Camberley to take tea with Bennett and Dorothy, now installed in Bennett's Cadogan Square property as Mrs Bennett, and were introduced to the month-old Virginia. Regular trips were made to London for entertainment and to visit old Mrs Swinnerton, who was giving cause for concern. She was being difficult at the nursing home in which she had been installed and opposing views on how to deal with the situation had given rise to some sharp letters between Swinnerton and his brother, Phil. In the end she was moved on 22 July.

A quiet summer preparing for his US tour and the publication of *Summer Storm* was followed by a period of intense activity. The book was published in the Autumn. It is a novel about love and romance and the attempts of the central characters to find both. Polly and Beatrice work for Miss Abel in a typing bureau. She dies in the early scenes leaving the girls to take on the business and make it a success. We are in a professional milieu where the capacities of the women are greater than in previous novels, allowing for more scope in action and thought. Polly Lane, especially, is well drawn. Swinnerton is good at portraying this type of strong, innocent and moral woman, who comes from a comfortable, loving background and who knows her mind. The philosophy in the novel deals with poverty, honesty and happiness. The love drama revolves round the suave, urbane Henry Falconer, who, at forty-three has squandered his youth. He is loved by Beatrice, with whom he has been involved, but desires Polly. To complete the triangles Polly is courted by Tom and Beatrice is

involved with Theodore, Miss Abel's brother, an old acquaintance of Henry's. Unbeknown to anyone she also has a husband, a Catholic, who would not divorce her, but who is conveniently killed in an accident as the story unfolds. The plot calls for Beatrice and Polly to come into conflict. This tangled web is unravelled with the resolution of Beatrice's complex affairs, Polly's success in financing the business, and Henry's ability to come to terms with his superfluous existence and his success in winning Polly's hand.

It is a very good novel. Swinnerton's technical skill is apparent, his characterisation has matured, the entertainment value is high. John Farrar writes:

He has written a glowing account of a young girl. ... In addition to this, he has constructed a psychological mystery, for in creating the life and character of Beatrice Gayney he maintains suspense by keeping her until close to the end of the story a baffling, uncertain figure. He has constructed his plot with skill and he unfolds it with lightness and surety.¹⁶

Farrar devotes an excess of space to describing the characters. He dwells on each creation, but makes his most observant comment about Tom: 'Her [Polly] boy lover is a magnificent creation. I do not know that the tragedy of unrequitted adolescent love has ever been better shown, nor the subtle difference between a girl's sisterly affection for a boy of her own age and her awakening passion for the older man she really loves'.¹⁷ Rouse considered the characterisation thin and the tone light 'which prevent the

reader from taking these people seriously'¹⁹, but his was a lone voice. The *Evening Standard* declared 'one expects clever studies of personality from Mr Frank Swinnerton; in his new novel ... he gives us quite a surprising amount of plot as well'.²⁰ Comparisons with Dickens characters were made by the *Boston Evening Transcript*, which says of Polly 'She might have been a Dickens heroine. She is perfectly moral, perfectly motivated, and perfectly modern'²⁰. Monkhouse likens Swinnerton's streak of cruelty in the novel to Dickens's²¹, whilst other critics emphasise the handling of relationships, realism and family life. Swinnerton deserved his good reviews. *Summer Storm* was his most accomplished novel to date.

On 18 September, after a few days socialising in London with their friends, the Swinnertons set sail on the *Samaría* for Swinnerton's second lecture tour of the USA. On this occasion, an older, wiser and more contented man, with the company and support of his wife, he was able to cope better with the factors which had made his first trip such an endurance. The nine day crossing was marked by poor weather, which affected Mary to the extent that she collapsed at dinner and had to remain in her cabin for some days. However, she recovered enough to judge a fancy dress contest and enjoy both the busy social life and the whales which swam alongside. In New York, tired out by the crossing, they were met by Doran, Farrar, Hansen and Grant Overton. Immediately interviews were requested and their social diary was full. Mary wrote regularly to her mother in Purley and whilst she was 'thrilled' by the New York skyline as well as the city, Swinnerton was already homesick, unwell with a cold, and had been forced to attend the

first night of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, so that he could be seen by the 'leading lights'.²² Their American friends sought to outdo each other with their hospitality. Rhinehart entertained them for a weekend. The Brandts gave them dinner and showed them Philadelphia. Doran booked two boxes at the theatre and the Swinnertons found themselves in the company of Somerset Maugham and, for the last time, Hugh Walpole, just before the friendship deteriorated into recriminations.²³ Exhaustion was soon evident. 'We are very sleepy this morning and just about tired out and fed up with New York and the Americans. ... We have only once been to bed at eleven since being here. The rest has either been twelve or two o/c'.²⁴ Mary was also finding the opulence difficult to accept. At dinner with the Knopfs in their grand apartment, she had been intimidated by the servants and could not reconcile the fact that Knopf's life-style was lavish, whilst his authors were badly paid.

Swinnerton's first lecture took place on 16 October to the Women's Literary Club in Grand Rapids. The publicity had announced that he would talk about 'Authors, their Friends, and their Critics'. In this lecture he commented on his qualifications to deliver such a talk, went on to look at the nature of criticism and its repercussions, and ended with a series of sketches about authors he knew personally. In other lectures he discussed the various styles of writing in the modern novel, the nature of realism, and contrasted the differing approaches of 'modern' and 'conservative' writers. His lectures were well received and newspaper reports were full of praise for his popularity, his anecdotes, his sparkling wit, and his constant good nature.

They then took refuge at the home of Mrs Moody in Chicago, the widow of a poet-dramatist, who had taken Swinnerton in during his first US tour, when he had been at his most depressed. She had an outstanding personality, intelligence, humour and sincerity. After the splendours of other homes, her large, old, shabby house in the negro quarter was a haven for the travellers. On this occasion they celebrated Hallowe'en there with a dance. Mary loved the house, the books, the two cars, which were at their disposal, the relaxed atmosphere and the people who populated it: artists, actresses, writers, sculptors, dancers. Mrs Moody owned a food factory and a restaurant and her staff were all women, whilst her servants were black. Whilst staying there Swinnerton was commissioned by Fanny Butcher to write a weekly literary article for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* for £10 per article.

So many people wanted to entertain, interview and meet them that they reluctantly moved on and Swinnerton began to experience again the frustrations of tiredness, lack of privacy, interruptions and pace of living. From Chicago they visited Indianapolis. After lecturing there they proceeded to Louisville, then on to New Orleans. From there they travelled for two days through cotton fields and tobacco plantations to Washington, where the Footners took them to their rambling, old house overlooking Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. Via Annapolis and Baltimore, they returned for two final weeks to New York. His last lecture at Middleburg Town Hall on 16 November was a disappointment. It was 'a bad wet night, a poor audience & not much cordiality'.²⁵ However, Swinnerton had consolidated his popularity and reputation and on 30 November he left for home on the *President Roosevelt*

with the Footners, who were on their way to Italy. It was a 'dry' ship and Mary was amused to see everyone carrying flasks, the contents of which would be added to the ginger ale which was being served. She was less amused when the crossing became stormy and she had to remain in bed for two days, feeling unwell.

The rest of 1926 and most of 1927 were quiet times for Swinnerton. His mother-in-law moved from Purley to Brighton, where he would visit her and take in the cricket at the same time. He relaxed by reading the entire novels of Jane Austen, which over the years he would regularly reread for pleasure. He began his *Chicago Tribune* letters for Mrs Butcher, which would help augment his income, which came to £2032 that year, with savings of £2045. This figure improved in 1927 to £2437 and £4450 saved. His outgoings were £1831. There were also his *Bookman* causeries, short stories and miscellaneous articles. He was hindered by a bad eye, which needed rest, the flooding of his newly acquired land, caused by heavy rain, and a problem over German sales of his work, which involved a two year correspondence with Max Guentzburger, the German translator of his novels. On 2 February he received his only letter from James Joyce, who acknowledged Swinnerton's support as one of 150 signatures protesting against the pirating by Samuel Roth of *Ulysses* in the USA. In June he accepted an offer from Charles Hanson Towne for a series of eighteen monthly articles for *Harper's Bazar*, at the same time writing his last letter for the US *Bookman*. A sadness was the death of Jane Wells, whom he had visited at her London nursing home on 23 May. He learnt of her death from the newspaper and attended her funeral on 10 October. He saw Bennett in London and on one occasion in August

Bennett and Dorothy came to Old Tokefield for lunch. After six months without work on a novel he began *A Brood of Ducklings* in August but soon faltered. He aimed to write 2000 words each day but progress was slow and a painful hand, damaged by a fall, contributed to his difficulties.

His only published work in 1927 was *Tokefield Papers* released by Martin Secker on 10 November. This consists of sixteen essays, which had appeared in *Good Housekeeping*, *Nash's Magazine* and *The London Evening News* in the UK and *The Century*, *Cosmopolitan*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, *Harper's Bazar* and *Garden and Home Builder* in the USA. All but two were written at Old Tokefield, hence the title. These miscellaneous essays were well received by his public and reviewers were equally complimentary about his witty observations of human actions and characteristics. The *Glasgow Evening News* wrote: 'As a vivacious essayist, with a pen that can turn a pretty compliment, barb a criticism so that it rankles, poke fun at the foibles of humanity, and grieve over the tragedy in life, Mr Frank Swinnerton ... has brought together a typical selection of essays. ... His candour is as engaging as his philosophy is sound.'²⁶ Another review states 'He is a realist concerning human nature, harsh, slightly cruel, yet kindly and always urbane. ... None can handle a sentence with more skill. Devilishly adroit, he can get himself out of any compositional scrape without re-casting his phrase'.²⁷ *The Manchester Guardian* tackles him for the 'faintly sermonising tone which pervades many of the essays' but goes on to say:

For our part ... we welcome it, since it is wholly sincere and exceedingly helpful and human, and also because it distinguishes him from the majority of contemporary essayists. ... His morality is no more and no less an appeal to imagination and a sensitive application of it to certain views of egotism to which we are all prone, to swank and to sentimentality, imitation or tactlessness.²⁰

Each essay examines an aspect of human behaviour, be it tact, inferiority, the need to give advice, respectability, the ability to enjoy treats. The treatment is a little simplistic but captures the essence of human behaviour. Touches of autobiography add to the enjoyment and the last chapter, *What I Demand from Life*, gives a clear indication that Swinnerton is basically a happy man, one who is not afraid of failure, who does not set impossible aims. He believes he has talent, not genius. He makes friends easily because he sees himself as affable and inoffensive, interested and affectionate. He is financially independent, yet still has the ambition to write one book, which is above average. His desires for the future are simple: health, privacy, security, the continued affection of those dear to him, and leisure to enjoy himself.

A Brood of Ducklings was completed early in 1928 at a total of 102,085 words. He immediately began a new novel, *Sketch of a Sinner*, which he fitted in with his journalistic commitments and regular visits to London with Mary. In April he began to put together another selection of essays for publication. This time it was an edited version of some of the regular London Letters he had

written for the US *Bookman* between 1920 and 1927. Published by Martin Secker during the year, under the title of *A London Bookman* there are over 100 sections, each commenting, often bitingly, on a book or play of the moment, on his opinion of fashion and taste. He tries to put current events into their true perspective with his usual honesty. These short pieces are very interesting, though mildly controversial. Their interest lies in the fact that Swinnerton clearly has opinions in areas about which he is an expert, based on long experience. So even if one does not agree, there is a feeling that at least his opinion is worth considering. The fact that he knows intimately the people about whom he writes adds depth to the articles.

On the nature of Art he comments that this to a critic is the composition of the writer's work, that is craft. To a novelist it is his inspiration, which he knows will be modified by his inability to express himself.²⁹ On novelists he says 'The novelist is not a philosopher. Directly he makes up his mind to teach a moral lesson, he becomes a second-class novelist'.³⁰ He also notes the death of literary figures, often with some sadness, as in the case of Katherine Mansfield, to whom he had been attracted by her genuine attempt to make him feel at ease, her lack of intellectual superiority and her strong personality.³¹ As with *Tokefield Papers*, *A London Bookman* provides a permanent reminder of the range of material Swinnerton produced, which had proved as popular as his novels with the public.

A Brood of Ducklings had been published three weeks before *A London Bookman*. It was his first novel for two years and once again deals with the lives of two sisters of contrasting

temperaments, but on this occasion they are not doomed to love the same man. Their potential ruin comes from their father, Ferdinand Meadows, a failed artist, who had been left by the early death of his wife to bring up his beautiful daughters alone. With their maturity he has become overpossessive and interferes with their affairs. It is a book about jealousy. On one hand there is Ferdinand's inability to allow his daughters to lead lives of their own and on the other Rhoda's inability to share her father's love with her elder sister, Catherine. Rhoda is headstrong and is involved with the philanderer 'Punch' Tead. The two men who are in love with the sisters, Joe Gascoyne and Jabez Talbot, have opposing political views, which they need to resolve if they are to find a meeting point as brothers-in-law. Through all the anguish an ending is resolved, where Ferdinand comes to realise that with the loss of his daughters he has gained the freedom to travel and live his own life and he is finally able to accept the ending of an old existence and look forward to a new one.

Virtually all the action is seen through Ferdinand's eyes. 'It is unusual for Mr Swinnerton to draw so fine and discerning a portrait of a man of culture, since his adult characters in former novels have been generally "flat", rather than complex human beings'.³² Whilst we abhor his possessiveness, the reader feels some sympathy with Ferdinand's dilemma. Another theme, first introduced in *The Elder Sister*, that of the ability to inflict cruelty, is explored further here in the character of Rhoda, the self-centred opportunist, who knows her search for adventure will affect the people around her. It is fitting that she should find her destiny in Jabez Talbot, the well-meaning socialist, whose

political viewpoint is at odds with that of poor, honest Joe and the wealthy Ferdinand. This is a rich and complex book, full of emotional observation, a lesson in how obsession can blind a man's life. 'Mr Swinnerton has a lyrical gift of evoking a mood, making his readers feel its tremulousness and then tragically crashing it to bits through the misunderstandings of the persons involved. This allows his novels a delicacy and a wistful sensitiveness which are altogether distinctive'.³³

With these two works behind them the Swinnertons travelled. They relaxed for two weeks in early June in Paris Plage, spending much of their time with Bennett and Dorothy. In October they drove to Disley to see Monkhouse and returned via London, where they visited the Yeomans, with whom Ursula Rowley (Swinnerton's old friends, who lived in Barrow) was staying, and then on to Southend to inspect old Mrs Swinnerton's latest lodgings. Then Swinnerton was unwell with colds and chills and he spent his enforced leisure by reading the entire *Forsyte Saga* in preparation for an article on Galsworthy for the *US Bookman*. He also sorted out his papers and destroyed old letters in preparation for the arrival of a new filing cabinet. In November he asked Monkhouse to stop his book reviews commitment for the *Manchester Guardian* and in December he supervised the installation of a central heating system, before welcoming Mary's mother for her Christmas visit. As he went into 1929 his income remained steady - £3104, out of which Mary had £45 each month for housekeeping. He paid slightly less tax, £145.19.10d as opposed to £158.17.5d in 1927, but increased his investments by £1520.

The Swinnertons attempted to escape the January snow when they took the Motorways coach through France to Nice. The four day journey was hampered by a rough crossing and treacherous driving conditions. At the Hotel d'Angleterre in Nice they were able to relax and watch the Carnival, which on closer inspection proved to be vulgar, ugly and childish. They frequented the opera and Mary enjoyed Monte Carlo, although she found the pigeon shooting on the front objectionable. The highlight of San Remo was the journey along the Riviera coast and the trip to the Gorge de Cion was quite spectacular, with snow capped mountains, icicles and frozen waterfalls and tunnels through the rock. When the snow arrived their plans were disrupted, but Wells was able to send a car for them so that they could visit him and Odette Keun in Grasse. The next day they lunched with Grant Richards and his Hungarian wife in their flat in Monte Carlo and on another occasion accepted an invitation from Somerset Maugham to visit his villa in Cap Ferrat. Maugham had met Swinnerton at a luncheon given by an American magazine editor and had liked his talent for mimicry. He sent a car for the Swinnertons and entertained them in his impressive villa, set in eleven acres with a swimming pool and tennis court. Mary was impressed. The rooms were large and lofty and expensively furnished. The luxury was maintained by twelve male servants. In the future the two men would meet on many occasions, sometimes by chance, at others by design. In an interview given to Hallam Tennyson³⁴ Swinnerton recalled that whenever they met they acted 'like a couple of cats' being wickedly derisive of their contemporaries.

Once home Swinnerton took up his latest novel again and spent the whole Spring composing it. Swinnerton's mother moved to her final home in Brighton, where she was looked after by a Mrs Nisbet. She was attended by a professional nurse and a Dr Griffiths until an antagonism developed between the nurse and Mrs Nisbet and other professional help was called for. The Swinnertons would often visit Brighton, see both mothers, watch the cricket and call on the Spaldings and Archibalds. When he went up to London he tended now to go alone. In August a garage was built at Old Tokefield to take the new car. 'Randy' was nine years old and on 13 August Swinnerton paid £410 for 'Sandy Boy' to Henleys in London.

Now he was no longer reviewing for the *Manchester Guardian* he became literary editor for the *Evening News*, taking over from J B Priestley, who was pleased with the choice of successor, but asked that a new title for the page should be found as he planned to take *A Bookman's Week* with him in order to start another series. Other work involved reading manuscripts, for which Heinemann paid him £300 in 1929 and a series of book reviews for the newly created British edition of *Harper's Bazar*. He still continued his weekly letter for the *Chicago Tribune*. All this brought in a good income, £3513 for the year and his savings and investments now stood at £7775.

Sketch of a Sinner was published in 1929. It is a novel of only four main characters. Lydia is the sinner of the title, married to an elderly antique dealer, whose business is struggling. She is loved by the mysterious Mr Gerrard and the young diletante poet, Ambrose Thayer. Trapped by her

circumstances she vacillates between duty to her husband and the needs of her two admirers. It is difficult to sympathise with Lydia, who seems unable to control her actions, with the consequences that she brings misery and tragedy to all the men. Ambrose has an illness and dies, leaving her what little money he has. She leaves old Sebastian to meet Mr Gerrard in France, but he is knocked down and killed whilst saving her from the wheels of a car. Devastated, she returns home to find that Sebastian too is dying but is prepared to forgive her.

It is an unsatisfactory work with the characters not well drawn. The men remain enigmas, whilst Lydia's shallow mind dominates her portrait. The events seem unrealistic and contrived, used as set pieces to move the plot along. Swinnerton has returned to his original working-class London setting but it is now beginning to compare unfavourably with his 'country' books and this one is especially depressing and interest is difficult to sustain. However Doran shared Bennett's and Wells's view that this was Swinnerton's best novel and the *New York Times* heralded it as a return to his high standard of story telling. The reviewer compared it to Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. 'There is ... something of the great Frenchman's power to vitalize insignificant things, in Swinnerton's recurrent scenes in the dusty, crowded curiosity shop, something of Madame Bovary herself in the picture of Lydia'.³⁵ Also praised is the characterisation. 'Under his deft manipulation the characters live so naturally in their drab surrounding that one forgets both the drabness and the fact that, actually, they are insignificant creatures, and perceives the naturalness only'.

1930 brought sadness to Swinnerton with the death of his mother on 18 July. She was 76 years old and was buried in Brighton. She had been ill for a long time and for the last years of her life had proved a difficult patient. He had written almost daily since he had left home until she had become too ill to read the letters and he had visited her often wherever she had been living. Whether this contributed to his lack of inspiration, it is impossible to say, but his new novel, begun on 1 January 1930 lay abandoned throughout the year. Other matters distracted him. He was invited to model for a bust by the American sculptor, Jo Davidson. The sessions were held at the Savoy in January and later in August, whilst staying in Brighton, Swinnerton paid a brief visit to Paris to sit for Davidson again. In the same month he attended a Doran dinner in London, where he saw Bennett, Wells, Max Beerbohm, A P Herbert, C B Cochran, Somerset Maugham, Drinkwater and Philip Gibbs. Also in August his friend and former employer Percy Spalding died. Whilst still in Brighton he received an unexpected letter from Helen Dircks, to which he replied a few days later. But when she wrote again on 4 October, he chose to ignore it.

Much of his writing in 1930 was for the US market, short stories and essays. He resigned his commitment to *Harper's Bazar* on 27 July but was still stretched to meet his deadlines. The bulk of his income of £2937 came from cheques sent by Pinker. His savings were £7051. An upset was Doran's departure from Doubleday and his joining the Randolph Hearst organisation, where he began to edit *Nash's Magazine*. As a result of this Swinnerton was to tell Doubleday in April 1931 that he would fulfill his contract

for two more works, but would then reconsider the relationship. Another potential income was declined when Swinnerton was approached by the American William Rose Benet to represent his publishing company, Brewer & Warren in the UK.

1931 began quietly as Swinnerton was suffering from neuritis. Bennett was seriously ill and Swinnerton was kept informed of news by Miss Nerney, Bennett's faithful secretary. On 27 March Bennett was dead and Swinnerton became entangled with the fight between Marguerite and Dorothy for Bennett's wealth. Using Motorways coach tours again, Swinnerton and Mary escaped to Germany at the end of May visiting one famous town after another. Mary liked Germany and changed her mind about the Germans, whom she had objected to so much in France. She was impressed by the hotel in Cologne, its large rooms draped in red, with strange continental eiderdowns and a huge balcony, on which they sat after dinner. In Eisenach their room overlooked the market square and the church, where Bach's father had been an organist. In Weimar they visited Goethe's house and in Dresden they insisted on seeing the Sistine Madonna and the two Vermeers at the art gallery. The schedule was a busy one and they had little time to themselves. Swinnerton did no work and was content to be a tourist, viewing everything and eating too much. In this two week multi-city tour, Swinnerton may not have achieved physical relaxation, but mentally he was able to begin to come to terms with the deaths of his mother and Bennett.

Home again, Swinnerton was still unable to pick up his novel and for a second year it lay neglected. Mary was busy visiting her mother in Brighton or entertaining her in Cranleigh, so Swinnerton visited London alone, saw his friends, especially Jo Davidson,

frequented the theatre and the Oval. On 23 September they took the Golden Arrow to Paris, where they stayed at the Hotel Savoy in the Rue de Rivoli, before making their way to the Manoir de Becheron in Azay-le-Rideau, which was near the Davidsons' home. A second dismal year was drawing to a close. His writings had earned him £2414 and his savings had increased to £8615.

In January 1932 Swinnerton took up his novel again, and in between a string of visitors and journeys to London he worked steadily on it and it was completed on 31 May. Now he contemplated the various offers, which came his way: Ernest Boyd invited him to contribute to a new journal *The American Spectator*, edited by himself, George Nathan, Theodore Dreiser, James Cabell and Eugene O'Neill; H J Massingham asked him to write on Thackeray in relation to his Victorian environment for a projected book *The Great Victorians*; Alfred Orage (ex-editor of *The New Age*, who had once offered Swinnerton half a guinea for an article on realism in 1910) now offered him space in his new journal *The New English Weekly*; Colston Leigh approached Pinker with an offer of between \$500 - \$700 per week for a lecture tour of the USA in 1933. (Swinnerton declined.) As well as these plaudits Swinnerton had his critics. Ezra Pound wrote to him on 6 February with an acid response to a recent article 'How to Read', which Swinnerton had written in the *Evening News*, and which, Pound said, betrayed Swinnerton's vanity and pompousness.

Whilst Keith Prowse was arranging another foreign tour for the Swinnertons, they spent two idle weeks in Brighton with Mrs Bennett. On 3 September they joined twelve people on a whistlestop tour of central European cities. Again the schedule was hectic and

there was time only for sightseeing. But Swinnerton enjoyed the weather, the company on the coach and the travelling. They passed through France and Germany and from Munich moved East to Salzburg, where they explored the castle and saltmines, to Vienna, which disappointed Mary even though they visited the theatre, a masked ball at the opera, the Hapsburg tombs and saw the Breugels in the Art Gallery and where Swinnerton gave an interview to the *Vienna Herald*. The reporter had imagined him to be a 'shy flower preserving an impenetrable incognito' and was surprised to find him on a British Travelways deluxe Pullman motor bus chatting in the lobby of the Grand with the hotel porter. Swinnerton told him that Salzburg was one of the most beautiful cities he had ever seen.³⁶ Their final destination was Budapest, which Swinnerton liked, but Mary was struck by the beggars, the rough countryside and the poverty.³⁷ On their return journey Swinnerton visited and appreciated many churches: Passau cathedral was 'a most remarkable baroque buildings and ... Regensburg ... a really beautiful and antique cathedral, small but full of loveliness'.³⁸ In Paris they were met by the Davidsons, who joined them for dinner.

On his return Swinnerton entered a nursing home in London for an operation and was visited by many of his friends during the two weeks stay: Roch, P P Howe, Gardiner, Doran, Secker, Vivian Phillipps, Ralph Pinker, Hugh Dent, Prentice and his brother, Phil. At home he entertained Mrs Bennett, Henry Williamson and Dorothy Cheston Bennett and began a new novel now that *The Georgian House* was published. In the introduction to the uniform edition, published in 1935, Swinnerton writes that he conceived this story as a reaction to the psychological, Freudian novelists,

whom he had just spent two and a half years reviewing for a London newspaper. He had tried to:

tell an old-style story which some may think a little melodramatic, but to tell it about people such as one might recognise if one met them in the real world. ... *The Georgian House* attempts only to tell a story. It has a moral, that moral is that it is better to be simple and happy than sophisticated and not so happy.³⁹

Lacking his usual undercurrent of thought, the novel becomes a more straightforward action thriller, which many newspapers advertised as good holiday reading. The plot concerns two wills. Old Starling has died and apparently left his money to Philip Spears. However, Starling's housekeeper and mistress, Ruth Coulevain, believes there is another will, from which she will inherit. She has been having an affair with Leonard Halpern, her solicitor, but in the absence of a second will, she bewitches Philip once he has come to live in the house and he marries her. She is, however, pregnant by Leonard. Rose Davitt is the person who will eventually save Philip from his unfortunate marriage. Philip discovers the second will and now that Ruth owns the house she discards Philip and approaches Leonard, who, as scheming as she is, first rejects her and then shoots her. Thus Philip re-inherits the house and Rose will be its next mistress.

Despite his change of style Swinnerton has produced fast, flowing, gripping events, which hold the attention completely. The work benefits from showing everyone's point of view so that a

complete understanding of the characters and their motives can be achieved. Its languid, country feel compares favourably with *Sketch of a Sinner*, the more depressing 'London' novel. But there is a lack of depth. Leonard's personality, though not stereotyped, comes a little too close to the 'modern villain, handsome, astute, clever, heartless'.⁴⁰ Rose's character is lost in the strength of Ruth and Leonard. The best portrait is of Ruth. Although she is completely ruthless, Swinnerton allows the reader to understand her motives, so that she becomes a pitiful character, whom one cannot completely dislike. It is, to quote *The Star*, 'a thoroughly good and well-written story, with a sound plot and plenty of shrewd characterisation'.⁴¹ Swinnerton's friends heaped praise on it and it became something of a bestseller, going into seven reprints.

The News Chronicle comments that Swinnerton does not concentrate all his energies on fiction:

The trouble with all novelists of any standing is that as soon as they show themselves to be capable of writing intelligent criticisms, as well as fiction they are distracted from their main purpose by the exacting demands of journalism. Even Mr Swinnerton's *Authors and the Book Trade* - lively reading as it is - was an unforgiveable interruption in his writing career.⁴²

True though this comment may be, there is nothing unforgiveable about *Authors and the Book Trade*. It was an instant success and had a second printing in January 1933. It is an excellent look at the components which make up the book trade. Each chapter examines

one aspect: why be a writer; why books are published; the task of the publisher's reader; literary agents; printing considerations; advertising; booksellers; reviewers; and the reading public. Swinnerton takes us through the progress of a book's life from its conception to its appeal to the reader. From his vast experience and with mild cynical amusement he is able to compile a succinct and accurate picture of life in the book world. There was inevitable criticism of some of his more outrageous statements, especially where they were aimed at booksellers, literary agents and reviewers. In the second impression he took the opportunity of adding a preface, in which he answered the critics. He replied in his typically tongue-in-cheek way, by quoting that he was occasionally described in the press as 'a conscientious mediocrity', but admitted to being 'painstakingly honest' and these were his credentials for supporting what he had written and he stood by his comments.

He paints a bleak picture for the writer. Of the 14,000 books published each year, he feels only 100 are good, and 1000 worth reading. He sets out his view that being well-read is not a good enough grounding for a publisher's reader. One needs to bury prejudices, be enthusiastic but calm, cautious yet bold, patient, wary, shrewd, know the book trade, be a critic, never make mistakes and know several languages. He admits that this paragon does not exist. Of literary agents he is fiercely supportive. He feels that all the effort and support they put into an unknown author should be rewarded with future profits on his works when he is famous. He defends publishers' profits by explaining their overheads and printing costs. He is critical of advertising's

ability to sell books, considers that booksellers have an impossible task in reading the market, attacks reviewers for their lack of impartiality and dismisses book clubs as simply promoters of popular novels.

Colin Still admires Swinnerton for exposing the personal feuds in literary London in this outspoken work and praises his 'lucid explanatory survey of the whole field of the book business ... and ... I can vouch for the accuracy and sound sense of much that he has to say'.⁴³ Some years after causing a stir with his critical appraisals of George Gissing and R L Stevenson, Swinnerton has once again attracted notice.

Swinnerton's short stories were insignificant and compared poorly with the achievements of his novels. Reginald B Johnson observed that 'he seems here almost too quiet, leisuredly and composed; bordering, indeed, upon the trivial. ... There is, in a word, no real distinction about these tales'.⁴⁴ Ashley Belbin considered them 'mere sketches of character with just an incident on which to hang them. These short stories are mostly to be found in the pages of American magazines, which must pay their author enviable sums for them'.⁴⁵ It is true that they brought in a good regular income and freed him to pursue the more creative task of composing novels. Twenty-three stories written between 1924 and 1932 were examined. They vary in quality and style. Some rely on action to sustain interest, whilst others set a scene, build the character, throw in an obstacle and wait for the resolution. The simplest ones work best: his study of jealousy between elderly sisters in 'Miss Jedburys'⁴⁶; of misunderstanding in 'The Shy Young Man'⁴⁷; of suspicion and honesty in 'The Ivory Figurine'⁴⁸.

Some of them are too conversational, predictable and the denouement too weak to merit mention. All have predictably happy endings and despite their tortured construction, some of the 'adventure' ones, such as 'The Will and the Way'⁴⁹ (where the hero is living in straitened circumstances with loss of memory, when he discovers he is heir to his dead uncle's fortune), 'The Gargoyle'⁵⁰ (a plain man wins the heroine by exposing her dissolute fiancé) and 'The Beauty in the Dining Car'⁵¹ (a chase round the Riviera to save an innocent beauty from a scheming fortune hunter), hold the reader's attention rather well.

Many begin well with novel situations, but often deteriorate into melodrama. Examples of these are 'The Red-Headed Knight'⁵² (lost in Devon while cycling, the hero acts as butler to help an impoverished gentlewoman escape unwanted attentions), 'The Fugitive'⁵³ (jumping into his car, the heroine begs the hero to save her from an unwanted suitor by driving her home to Exeter) and 'Better than Fame'⁵⁴ (successful actress rekindles the love of the doctor she left behind, by disguising herself as his housekeeper). The most memorable stories achieve all the ingredients of the successful short story: instant scene setting, an original idea, acceptable character presentation in the time available, and an unexpected conclusion. In 'The Celebrity'⁵⁵ a comfortable seaside existence is disrupted for the Windleshams when news breaks in the press that Mr Windlesham's sister, Lucy, is a famous novelist. Their house is besieged by curious neighbours and the press, as Lucy arrives in flight from Sir Robert Brentwood-Powys, who has been pursuing her from Egypt. The Windleshams have to trap her into agreeing to marry him before

their peaceful lifestyle can be regained. The most successful story, 'The Guest'⁵⁶ incorporates all the necessary ingredients. Bored, Abel Raikes is loitering outside a restaurant. Cumberland, an acquaintance, passes by and asks him to make up a foursome as he wishes to propose to a young lady, Sybil. Abel is dismayed when he is introduced to her and the evening falters as everyone realises something is amiss. Eventually Abel and Sybil are able to have a few words alone and make up a misunderstanding, which separated them in the past. They return to the other two: ' "I say, Cumberland", apologised Abel. "I'm afraid your evening is spoiled ... because my wife and I insist upon dancing with each other".'

Chapter 12

ARNOLD BENNETT

How it came about that Swinnerton sent Bennett a copy of his novel, *The Young Idea* in 1910 and how their first meeting at a lunch at the Authors' Club passed, has already been described. Bennett was drawn to this young man because of Swinnerton's qualities: his talent for characterisation and composition; his ready conversation, the opposite of Bennett's hesitant speech; his lack of guile and obsequiousness; his friendliness and honesty; their apparently shared background, the genteel poverty to which both had been born; and their common roots in the Staffordshire potteries.

After their meeting Bennett returned to France and for three years letters were exchanged. Swinnerton wrote *On the Staircase* and in the Spring of 1914 Bennett wrote 'there is something in this book that makes me want to see you again'' and Swinnerton was subsequently invited to lunch at the Berkeley Hotel to meet Mrs Bennett. This meeting had more cordial results and Swinnerton was invited by Bennett to see his yacht, *Velsa*. Marguerite was not a good sailor, Bennett needed company on board and he assumed that Swinnerton sailed. Bennett had now returned to live in England, at Comargues, Thorpe-le-Soken in Essex and it was in July 1914 that Swinnerton boarded *Velsa* for the first time. They sailed from Westminster Bridge down the Thames cared for by a captain, a cook and a deck hand. The trip was successful and 'This was the beginning of the richest of all my happy friendships with men and women of every kind. In spite of the seventeen years difference in

our ages it was to last, unblemished, until Bennett's death in 1931².

Swinnerton was seriously ill towards the end of 1914, but when he had recovered Bennett and Wells decided that he needed looking after and so invitation followed invitation to Comargues. Some of Swinnerton's knowledge of Bennett's affairs comes from Bennett's secretary, Winifred Nerney, whom he met at this time and who remained a good friend until she died. Bennett's nickname for Swinnerton, 'Henry' also comes from this period, perhaps as a result of a ridiculous story Swinnerton had told to a soldier visiting the house. In response the soldier had christened him 'Henry'. Bennett had a brother called Frank and 'Henry' could also have been a way of differentiating between the two men. Entertainment at Thorpe-le-Soken consisted of drives in Bennett's Ford, sometimes to Frinton-on-Sea, riding, and tennis. Swinnerton was also a witness to the beginnings of Bennett's incompatibility with Marguerite. Once she had accepted him as a friend, she did not hide her volatile nature, which was at odds with Bennett's calm and his emotional inhibition. Swinnerton was charitable to her and believed that life in a foreign country of which the temperament was so alien to hers made her difficult. She was extremely proud of Bennett's success, yet she needed constant flattery which Bennett, a man who did not understand women, was unable to give.

During the first World War, Bennett was offered a job at the Ministry of Information and he took some rooms at the Thames Yacht Club without telling Marguerite. Then she acquired a pied-a-terre in Rathbone Place, and Swinnerton would visit both. Marguerite was

lonely and she turned to Swinnerton for help, and he cautioned her to be reasonable with Bennett when discussing her predicament and future with him. She successfully took Swinnerton's advice and the Bennetts together moved into a flat in George Street, Hanover Square. Bennett never knew of Swinnerton's interference and Swinnerton continued to be a regular guest at the house and also saw Bennett at the Reform Club.

The War ended and Bennett became ill through overwork and because of Marguerite's difficult personality. Swinnerton had tried to assuage her boredom and feelings of neglect, and indulge her taste by escorting her to the theatre on occasions when Bennett was preoccupied with his work. As well as these worries people leant on Bennett for support, and his business dealings were also complicated. Friends advised Swinnerton, to whom Bennett listened, to interfere and suggest that Bennett should take a holiday. Although Swinnerton hated meddling in other people's affairs he was so worried that he did speak out and when he discovered that Bennett would not take a holiday alone, he offered to accompany him and Bennett jumped at the suggestion. Within minutes a passage had been arranged on a Booth liner to take the two men to Lisbon. When Marguerite first heard of the trip she was furious that Bennett should have preferred Swinnerton's company to hers, but she was eventually persuaded to accept the situation.

They sailed on the RMS Hildebrand on 30 January 1920 and Bennett became a changed man once he was at sea. On arrival at Oporto Swinnerton was enchanted. Whilst his journey had been made to restore his friend to health, 'a less important detail was my own sensational enrichment'.² They stayed in Mont Estoril and

during the day would walk or drive in a horse-drawn fly, whilst the evenings were often spent in the company of Mr Radcliffe, a Liverpool newspaper proprietor, his daughter and members of the map-making firm, Bartholomew. Whilst Swinnerton made sure that Bennett left his pen alone, Bennett was scandalised that Swinnerton should be so idle and find it so easy to abandon his. On their walks they would converse about their friends, Swinnerton would impersonate his bosses, they would laugh at shared jokes, but personal talk was avoided. With no work or worries chasing him, Bennett was returned to Marguerite on 3 March much restored. He had been 'thankful to find understanding companionship in a man ... whose sole positive assets were humour and loquacity'. ⁴ Their next meetings took place at the Club on George Street.

In 1921 Marguerite announced that she was leaving Bennett. She had met a man, René Legros who gave her the affection she craved. But, more importantly Bennett had grown weary of her constant requests for more money to spend, which he could not afford. And so they separated. Apart from a single comment Bennett never complained about Marguerite during the marriage and once it was over he never referred to her again. Although most people then rejected her, Swinnerton continued to see her and wrote to her after she had returned to France, where she remained ever hopeful until Bennett's death that they would be reconciled.

When Bennett took up a bachelor existence in Cadogan Square Swinnerton would attend his musical soirees and parties. Bennett liked to have his presence as he depended on Swinnerton's gregariousness to smooth over situations with people he had invited, of whom he was not sure and with whom he was therefore

uncomfortable. Swinnerton and Bennett corresponded regularly, approximately once a week, with Swinnerton asking advice on various aspects of his work, whilst Bennett would seek Swinnerton's opinion on publishing, financial problems and other business matters. In 1923 Swinnerton bought Old Tokefield and Bennett visited it on 21 May 1923 bringing with him a young actress, who had appeared in the Liverpool production of his play *The Love Match*. This was Dorothy Cheston, so unlike Marguerite in appearance and character, and who, although there was no sign of it on that occasion, would become Bennett's companion for the last eight years of his life.

The rise of Bloomsbury was to have an effect on Bennett's standing. As early as 1917 Bennett, speaking generally, criticised the experimental novelists for sacrificing character to realism. In reply Virginia Woolf published a scathing document entitled *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown*, which she first delivered as a lecture to the Heretics, Cambridge on 18 May 1924. In it she made fun of Bennett's, as well as Wells's and Galsworthy's, method of character drawing. She believed his photographic vision of scenes was *passé*. But she was also offended that the criticism should come from someone who could write so easily and fluently, whilst to her every word was a struggle and a painful emotional experience. Others took up the tone of the criticism and went further, accusing him of provincialism and ostentatious love of wealth. For a time Bloomsbury's superiority, their cultural elitism and Woolf's modernistic fiction, using devices such as symbolism and 'stream of consciousness' eclipsed Bennett's generation of writers. Bennett replied in print and a literary war

was waged throughout the 1920s. Swinnerton, a staunch supporter of Bennett as a writer and as a man, was furious about this criticism, especially as he did not appreciate Woolf's style himself, and lost no opportunity to respond in print. Although on occasion he did allow Woolf a certain originality and talent, he more generally attacked her style. In *The Georgian Literary Scene* she is dismissed as an introspective snob, a woman without emotional depth, totally subjective in approach and lacking imagination. She was essentially 'a catcher of memory of her own mental vagaries, not a creator'.⁵ In later life Swinnerton would be irritated by researchers who contacted him for information on the Bloomsbury Set. Having lived through that period, he was assumed to have been acquainted with these intellectuals. In fact he had never desired to meet them. Swinnerton's defence of his friend was admirable and yet to some extent he had missed the fact that Woolf's criticism of Bennett had been purely professional. Bennett and Woolf met socially from time to time and when he died, Woolf wrote in her journal that she was sorry about his death.

Other harm to Bennett's reputation came from Marguerite's book, written in defence of herself, *My Arnold Bennett*. Also from other quarters where his work for the MOI caused him to be branded a Tory. However, his articles for the *Evening Standard* restored some of his reputation. But he was more concerned with domestic problems. As soon as Swinnerton returned from honeymoon in 1924 Bennett asked him to see a solicitor, Sir John Withers, on his behalf to discuss the possibility of a divorce from Marguerite. Swinnerton obliged, but without success. Then Dorothy became pregnant and Bennett realised that his lifestyle would have

to change. The eighty-eight ton yacht, *Marie Marguerite*, Velsa's successor, would have to be sold and his staff protected from upheaval. Bennett told Swinnerton of Dorothy's impending confinement, but the details of the new set up at Cadogan Square when Dorothy Cheston Bennett, as she was now called, moved in, he was to learn from Winifred Nerney. Bennett never spoke to Swinnerton of the tantrums, the excesses, the spending and the interruptions he had to endure. However, Swinnerton was able to observe many of the problems for himself. He began to know Dorothy better after Virginia's birth and in the summer of 1928, when Swinnerton and Mary were holidaying in Étapes at the same time as the Bennetts were in Le Touquet, their close proximity exposed the harsher side of Dorothy's nature. Bennett persuaded the Swinnertons to move to the Hotel Metropole in Paris Plage in order that they could spend time together and for some days everything went well. Then one day when they set off for Amiens, Bennett in his own car and the Swinnertons in a hired vehicle, Dorothy forgot her manners. She became imperious, selfish, rude and made the Swinnertons feel like inferior relatives. Other incidents followed, but the last straw for Swinnerton was her rudeness on the last day to Mary. He could handle rudeness to himself, but it offended him deeply when Mary was slighted. He thus cancelled their dinner engagement with the Bennetts and when Bennett discovered the cause he was much distressed that Dorothy should have been the cause of an estrangement, however temporary, between Swinnerton and himself.

Dorothy's financial losses in doomed theatrical projects wore Bennett down financially. They moved from Cadogan Square to

Chiltern Court, a flat in the same building as Wells, near Baker Street Tube station, and relations between them began to deteriorate quite quickly. Bennett had tried to protect Virginia by placing £13,000 into a trust fund for her, and Dorothy by inscribing his manuscripts to her. Swinnerton had been asked to act as trustee. Then in 1930 on a visit to France Bennett contracted typhoid. He needed to talk to Swinnerton urgently and had arranged a meeting on 23 January 1931, which Swinnerton was unable to keep as he had agreed to meet George Doran on that day. So a date the following week was set, but it was never kept as Bennett was too ill by then. Swinnerton has surmised that Bennett had meant to confide in him that he and Dorothy were to part. On 26 March Swinnerton was summoned to the flat by a telegram from Dorothy and when he saw the straw spread outside the tube station to deaden the traffic noise, he knew Bennett was dying. All the Bennetts were gathered in the flat, but Swinnerton was allowed a brief private moment with Bennett. It was the last time he saw him alive as he died the following day. The tribute he had been asked to write days before his death by the *Evening Standard* appeared on the 28 March and the first Swinnerton knew of this was when, summoned again by Dorothy, he saw a notice of it on a poster. Once at the flat he found Dorothy distraught at the apparent desertion of Bennett's friends. They paid their last respects, then, at Dorothy's bidding, Swinnerton went upstairs to ask Wells why he had not been down. He found Wells in tears over Swinnerton's tribute in the *Evening Standard*, deeply grieved by his friend's death, but he refused to visit Dorothy as he was convinced she had been responsible for his death. Swinnerton too grieved. He wrote

to Jamie Hamilton on 1 April 1931 replying to a letter of sympathy from him:

It has been a wretched time, and I am now beginning to feel the result of so much strain, so that kind words are very welcome. ... For his friends the loss is going to be ever more serious, because he wasn't what you might call an ordinary friend to anybody. To me, he was a sort of father, brother, and son, as well as a friend. I used to feel paternal to him, and he used to feel paternal to me. So it is going to be very hard.

When Bennett died he left very little cash, with most of the money tied up; Dorothy was desperate and bombarded Swinnerton not as executor of the will, as this was Alistair ('Duff') Tayler, but as a voluntary trustee, with lengthy letters seeking his agreement for her to reinvest the shares in projects which Swinnerton considered unsound, but he demurred. He gave her sound advice as to how she should proceed with her life. He treated her fairly but tried to make her see the consequences of some of her more extreme actions. He then agreed in November to become guardian to Virginia in the event of Dorothy's death, but this counted for nothing when in 1933 Dorothy, now in the USA, demanded that Virginia be taken away from her stable upbringing in England and be sent to her. Virginia, against everybody's wishes went and subsequently spent an unnatural childhood with her mother.

Swinnerton's final duty on Bennett's behalf saw him drawn into a battle between Marguerite and Dorothy over the ownership of

Bennett's manuscripts. Marguerite claimed them as her own despite the fact that Bennett had inscribed them to Dorothy in 1928 in Swinnerton's presence and had even noted the fact in his journal on 18 December. Nevertheless in 1934 Marguerite instigated court proceedings against Dorothy and Swinnerton, in his role as trustee. Marguerite initially won her case, but the decision was overturned on Appeal. Exhausted by the stress and the bickering, Swinnerton now relinquished his trusteeship to the insurance company Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation, which had been provided for in the Deed of Trust.

After Bennett's death Winifred Nerney joined Doubleday and worked in their London office for thirty years until she retired in 1961. She died in May 1964, having kept in regular touch with Swinnerton throughout the years, and he was one of the speakers at the dedication of the Winifred Nerney Memorial in 1965. This consisted of a special collection of books which was presented to the library at the English Speaking Union in October 1965.

Chapter 13

FREELANCE YEARS 1933 - 1939

In his excellent atmospheric work *Reflections from a Village*¹ Swinnerton recalls how his dream of country living had been conceived. When he had caught diphtheria as a young boy whilst living in his paternal grandfather's Farringdon Road house, he had been isolated behind a heavily disinfected brown blanket in an attic room; his mother's nursing and the regular visits by the doctor to paint his throat had saved his life. Country air had been recommended, so the family had moved to Hornsey. There Swinnerton had dreamt of living in the real country and owning a cottage. The reality of Old Tokefield², protected from prying eyes by deep and wide hedges of privet, thorn and holly, provided for the unambitious Swinnertons a haven of bliss and happiness. Other visitors were less happy, especially when their wellbeing was threatened by the low oak beams. Tall men, such as Aldous Huxley and Robert Nichols would walk about crouching, much to everyone's amusement, but it was Arnold Bennett who managed to bang his head on the scullery doorway.

The first six years at Cranleigh were blessed by abnormally fine weather, so Swinnerton was able to work all morning and during the long evenings in his study, whilst Mary was supervising domestic arrangements, and the afternoons were spent exploring the countryside together by road and footpath, ten miles each way being by no means unusual. The housekeeper was always cheerful and helpful and her loyalty and devotion made her a firm friend long after she had retired and nominated her successor. Lawson Wood had left Brincklow, who was well respected in the village for his

horticultural knowledge. He lived seven miles away, would cycle in and was so devoted to his employers that he would often be found in the garden on Sundays.

The pattern of the years up to the Second World War followed closely that set in his early years at Old Tokefield, but the advent of the war and the birth of Olivia in 1937, would change the domestic routine irrevocably. In 1933 another friend was lost when John Galsworthy died. The Footners³ and Saxton came over from the USA and were entertained as were Bennett's sisters, Phil, the Dents and the Richard Churches. Swinnerton attended the Dent supper for Richard Church on 24 May and another friendship was formed. Church was literary editor at Dents in the 1930s and in this capacity he would contact Swinnerton to write reports, to give opinions on his own work, and to support him when he had difficulties with the firm. He was a welcome visitor at Old Tokefield and it was with Swinnerton's help that his book *The Porch* was published by Knopf in the USA in 1937. He would review Swinnerton's novels as they appeared and both shared a love of country living and country matters.

His miscellaneous journalism disposed of, Swinnerton concentrated on background reading for both *The Georgian Literary Scene*, which he began on 1 May and for *Elizabeth*, his next novel. By the end of the year three chapters of the former and 10,072 words of his novel had been completed. Not surprisingly his income for 1933 was low - £850, and this was a considerable worry to him. However his savings were healthy at £8650, made up of monies in the New York Trust Co. and the Midland Deposit account.

In 1934 he began to visit London on Saturdays instead of his habitual weekday trips. On 13 April, as a long standing member of the London Library, he was invited to the extension ceremony, where Baldwin spoke. Eye trouble affected his writing, but he systematically endeavoured to complete both works. *Elizabeth* was finished first on 11 June and on 11 August advance copies had arrived and were distributed to his friends.⁴

He was unhappy with *Elizabeth*. He wrote to Norah Hoult that he had just finished a 'rotten novel'⁵, and to Marie Belloc Lowndes that he had the 'utmost contempt' for it⁶. But when it was released in the Summer, sales were good and he began to revise his opinion. In August they had reached 6,500 copies and by 1 November Hutchinson reported the sale of 10,000. The story is a detailed reconstruction of life in a little fishing village in Sussex in the late nineteenth century, when it is overtaken by progress. It is a long novel, which follows the adventures of its numerous characters from their childhoods to their maturity as they are affected by the rebuilding of the village into a fashionable resort. These are the Cordells, the Swifts, the Roots and the Bradleys. Eliza and Beth hold centre stage and although the pace is leisuredly and the plot intricate, the storyline is gripping. The plot hangs together well, with each scene appropriately moving on the narrative,

As to the characters 'Beth grew up in a friendly, successful, intelligent home. ... Eliza grew up in the shadow'.⁷ Beth's background gives her a stability and radiance to overcome all of life's vicissitudes. Eliza's mother is 'maudlin and tired and forgetful, her brothers surely two of the nastiest boys that ever

sprawled into the pages of a novel, and her father a drunken, self-pitying, grandiose wreck of a failed journalist'.⁹ It is no surprise that Eliza should be mean and spiteful and totally unable to handle the blows which befall her. Swinnerton's handling of the onset of persecution mania, which leaves her unable to cope with life and thus to commit suicide, is masterly. Unsurprisingly, both girls love the same man, Julian Bradley, but he marries someone else. He is the final cause of Eliza's death and Tom Root, the good, kind son of one of the builders fighting for the growth of Seahampton, is the means by which Beth will eventually be united with Julian.

The second level of the story deals with the fight between the well-intentioned Roots and Lott, the profit-orientated newspaper proprietor, who is the rival builder. Both levels interlace well, allowing Swinnerton to bring out his abilities in describing happiness, pain, sorrow and tragedy. His story telling reaches a new peak in this finely crafted work, and his panoramic view of progress is so successful that he deserved the good advertising and good reviews. By 1951 only 41 copies remained to be sold at a reduced price. *Elizabeth* had now overtaken all his previous fiction and had become his most successful novel to date.

Swinnerton spent the rest of the Summer working on *The Georgian Literary Scene* and he completed it on 11 September. Four days later he learnt that Mary was pregnant. Only Phil was allowed to share the news before the Swinnertons took another European Motorways coach this time to Italy. Swinnerton amused himself by noting the standard of the hotels and the quality of the food in his diary. They revisited Rome and for the first time saw Genoa,

Pisa, Spezia and Florence. He was enchanted by Naples. 'Ruins of Pompeii (marvellous); in aftn to the bubblings of Solferata; at night to the top of Vesuvius. A really wonderful day of sightseeing'⁹ Venice was a revelation. Three gondolas were needed to take the party to the Grand Hotel, where the Swinnertons had a ground floor room overlooking the Grand Canal. On their return they met and dined with Jo Davidson in Paris. Mary described the sights, hotels and processions which they encountered to her mother in long letters, but she only mentioned her pregnancy when she returned home. Until now she had not believed the news and both the Swinnertons were excited. In December he began work on a new novel, provisionally called *The Three Old Men*¹⁰ but with only one published work his income was £1300 for 1934 and his savings had fallen to £4340.

1935 should have been a happy and fulfilling year for the Swinnertons. But tragedy struck on 14 February when Mary was very ill in the night and Dr Walker was called. Concerned about her premature labour Mary was hospitalised locally in the village instead of the London nursing home which had been booked. She was kept almost unconscious throughout the day, while Swinnerton remained at Old Tokfield working on articles and correspondence. Jane was born at 8 pm. The next day Swinnerton wrote to his friends with the news and to Mrs Bennett arranging for her to come and stay. All seemed well and Swinnerton was thrilled. On the 16th more letters were written and congratulatory ones received. So many telegrams had been delivered that he told the boy not to come for each one. No one realised that anything was wrong with the baby until Jane began to ail on the 20th. On the 22nd she had two

convulsions and the following day she suddenly died at 2 pm from a brain haemorrhage and was buried at noon two days later. An indication of Swinnerton's suffering can be seen from the blank pages which followed in his diary. Sadly, congratulatory letters still came: A A Milne wrote with real pleasure about Jane's birth five days after her death.''

Talking to Michael Geare of *The Bookseller* many years later'² Swinnerton admitted that he had only hated two people in his life'³, the second being the doctor, who had attended Mary. When she had gone into premature labour the doctor had not examined her and did not realise that she could not bear children naturally. He had waived aside Swinnerton's plea to take her immediately to London. As a result the local doctor had been called in when Mary had become very distressed, and instruments had to be used, which Swinnerton believed caused a blood vessel in the brain to be torn, this damage being the cause of Jane's death. He swore that if there were to be another child, it would be born in London under the supervision of an experienced gynaecologist.

Swinnerton attempted to pick up his routine. Unable to concentrate on his novel he abandoned it and filled his time with other matters: a trip to Chester to lecture to the Chester Society; a preface to Bennett's *Letters to his Nephew*. By the end of April he had begun to write again and in between a holiday in Brighton, a constant stream of guests'⁴, and flooding caused by blocked ditches, which necessitated the intervention of the Rural District Council, Swinnerton worked systematically on his novel. He no longer kept meticulous records of how many words he had written, nor did he find it easy to write: he spent a lot of time

amending and reworking. Apart from his regular *Chicago Tribune* letter, Swinnerton wrote a few articles for *John O'London's Weekly* and the *Daily Telegraph* and an occasional review for *The Bookseller* and *The Sunday Times*. As a result his income was only £860 and his savings had fallen even more, to £3580. He did have shares in foreign companies, but he believed them to be of little value. The financial situation was beginning to look worrying.

The Georgian Literary Scene was the only highlight of this sad year, although it was launched to mixed reviews. The work gives a panoramic view of literature from the times of Henry James to those of T S Eliot. Seventy-four literary figures are examined, a critical appraisal made of each and their place in literature designated. Swinnerton knew many of the personalities intimately and it must have been difficult for him to see them objectively, especially as he himself was part of the scene he was assessing. However, this very knowledge is the strength of the work as he is able to paint succinct, accurate pen portraits and relate entertaining anecdotes. His excellent critical abilities are also well used here, although personal prejudices inevitably creep in at times. He calls Woolf 'very clever and very ingenious, but on the whole creatively unimportant'. He speaks of Lytton Strachey's 'success in puppetry' and finds in James Joyce no truly creative imagination, but only 'abnormal cleverness as a virtuoso'.¹⁵

He writes about novelists, poets, speakers, essayists and the theatre, and covers 550 closely written pages. It is to his credit that 'there is not a sentence in which Mr Swinnerton has indulged in critic's jargon'.¹⁶ It is written with humour as an entertainment, not as a dry, academic tome. However, other reviews

were more critical of his achievement. 'Mr Swinnerton goes marching through Georgia, pursuing a series of erratic paths of his own, resolutely refusing to halt at certain well-known and highly estimated spots'¹⁷. And more: 'He has trusted too much to memory, and refrained from purchasing a trustworthy map of the land he is going to explore. ... No one will go with Mr Swinnerton who wishes to learn about anything except the novelists of his period. He is capricious and spasmodic in his glances at the poets, essayists, historians and critics of his time'.¹⁸ Most critics found his attitude to Joyce and Bloomsbury questionable, with some justification. They also felt that he gave too much space to lesser figures such as Allan Monkhouse and not enough to the likes of St John Ervine and Walter de la Mare. *The New York Post* on the other hand agreed with his assessment of Bloomsbury and Joyce and called the book 'quite the juiciest and most enjoyable volume of its kind that has been published for a long time'.¹⁹

Other critics praised his craft. Commenting on its high selling price the *New York Sun* believed 'there never was such value, in our opinion. It is not only quantity but quality. Nothing is more remarkable about this book than the ease with which Mr Swinnerton carries his enormous load of critical commentary. He is never out of breath and never out of patience'²⁰ In the end, opinions of the time depended on the views of the reader. The conservative among them will have found it an excellent, impressive achievement, whilst the more avant-garde will have condemned it for its pompous attitude to young experimental writers and its emphasis on catholic writers, whether

their talent be deserving of mention or not. In a work of this kind it is not surprising that Swinnerton wrote about the people with whom he felt most at home. His weakness was his incomplete understanding of the writers who held no appeal to him. Despite this *The Georgian Literary Scene* was for many years considered a standard text in its field and when it had the distinction of being added to Everyman's Library, it was called 'a wise and mellow appreciation of this century's writers'.²¹

The works Swinnerton concentrated on in 1936 were his novel *Harvest Comedy* and his *Autobiography*. He received letters from Margery Allingham and Dorothy L Sayers and made two rare excursions to London for social events. The first on 24 April was a dinner party at the Ivy given by Saxton, where he caught up with H G Wells, Aldous Huxley, Siegfried Sassoon, Arthur Bryant, Henry Tomlinson and Jimmy Horsnell. On 21 May he attended a detective dinner given by Sadleir which brought Swinnerton together with Dorothy L Sayers, E C Bentley, Henry Wade, C Day Lewis and Milward Kennedy. His autobiography progressed so well that it was completed on 14 July after which the Swinnertons spent four days in London as tourists, and now he gave his attention to exclusively to *Harvest Comedy*. With these two works taking up his time, little journalism was written. The latter part of the year was quiet, except for a rare visit to Wells, where he dined with the J B Priestleys and the Anthony Wests and stayed the night. Minor ailments dogged the Autumn, but a much healthier bank balance cheered him up. With new works in print his income rose to £1890 during 1936 and investments were £3500 plus whatever was lodged in his deposit account and the New York Trust Company.

Despite his unsocial year, there were various matters to concern him. In December there was flooding once more at Old Tokefield and consequent problems with the Council over the enlargement of the culvert. Also in December he received an invitation to lecture in the USA again, but he declined. During the year he had been approached on behalf of Marguerite Bennett to help secure a civil list pension for her. Mindful of previous entanglements with the Bennett women, Swinnerton politely declined. On the other hand, he did agree to pay the school fees of Rosemary, the daughter of Ursula Rowley. Finally, in March E M Forster snubbed him, presumably because of Swinnerton's comments in *The Georgian Literary Scene*. Henry Tomlinson, writing to Swinnerton in March, had re-examined the offending passage and had found it just and concluded that Forster was simply unused to objective criticism about him.²²

Swinnerton: An Autobiography came out in the USA in December 1936 to mixed reviews and uncertain sales, and was serialised in *Good Housekeeping* in the UK prior to its publication in February 1937. He had received a £1100 advance for it from Hutchinson. It is a long work, dedicated to Mary, the first chapters dealing with his personal life until he joined Dents. Thereafter the content diversifies to examine the publishing world and personal details are largely lost. Excellent portraits of the publishing milieu are given and of authors, with a chapter each devoted to Bennett and Wells. The final third concentrates on the many people who crossed Swinnerton's path during the years he lived amongst London's literati. He writes of his elders, his fellow Reform Club members

and his contemporaries and concludes in 1924 with his first trip to the USA and his subsequent marriage.

It is an enjoyable and absorbing book, which paints a vivid picture of London literary life. Swinnerton's natural modesty and understanding of perspectives in life have resulted in:

an autobiography without affectation of any kind ... a story with generosity toward his colleagues and fellowmen without a suspicion of flattery ... a rare quality in literary biography. ... Swinnerton's portraits of many of his contemporaries are shrewd and accurate. ... There seems to be a quickly sensitive, fundamentally human chemical substance in Swinnerton that reacts directly and intelligently to men and women everywhere'²³.

After describing the content of the work, the *Evening Standard* comments:

There are no high lights. It is a quiet story of a quiet man. It seems to me that his values are real, that they go deep, and that the very limitations of this book are the consequence of a refusal to plunge about spectacularly in pursuit of lucrative and picturesque vanity. The one department in which Mr Swinnerton's life has been sensationally successful ... is the department of friendship. ... Affection, tolerance and goodwill are the outstanding tributes of the character here revealed to us - a character well worth considering as that of a man who appears to have done what few do - achieve happiness.²⁴

It was the first time Swinnerton had revealed himself to the public at large, and the risk had proved successful. Reviewers were complimentary about his portrayal of his world, but others took offence at the portrayal of themselves. Swinnerton was never a sycophant and his anecdotes are honest, without being malicious. However, Forster was once again upset at his own portrait and he wrote to Swinnerton on 12 March 1937 denying ever having met him. In reply Swinnerton assured him that he had witnessed the event he had recounted, but Forster remained unappeased.

1937 was a milestone year. The progress of *Harvest Comedy* was insignificant against the changes taking place around him. After ten years of writing the London Letter for the *Chicago Tribune*, Swinnerton gave the commitment up in January and was immediately approached by Viola Garvin, who invited him to become the novel reviewer for *The Observer*, taking over the post vacated by the death of Gerald Gould. Swinnerton agreed and his first piece was published in the 4 April issue. In March he predictably took a Motorways coach with twelve fellow travellers to Menton. It was an unadventurous holiday, with poor weather. After two weeks the Swinnertons returned with colds. In April the Rover company supplied him with a new car. But the major event would occur in July. Mary had conceived again and the birth of a second daughter would change life at Old Tokefield irrevocably.

Swinnerton grew increasingly nervous as the pregnancy progressed. He was summoned to Harley Street on 26 May to be told of Mary's child-bearing difficulties. With relief he learnt that she would need a caesarian and there was no question that the birth could take place in Cranleigh. Whilst waiting for the baby

to arrive Swinnerton completed *Harvest Comedy*, became immersed in his book reviews, and gave permission to the OUP to reprint *Nocturne* in the World Classics Series, the royalties to be divided equally between Swinnerton and Hutchinson. Mary entered the clinic on 25 July and Olivia was born at 8.30 am on the 26th - a small child of 4 lbs 10 oz. The birth was announced in *The Times* and this time there were no complications. Three weeks were spent in London until mother and daughter were allowed to come home on 14 August.

While the Swinnertons were adjusting to their new way of life, *Harvest Comedy* was published on 2 September. The publicity boasted that it had 'the largest pre-publication sales of any of his books'. *The Daily Mail* selected it as their Book of the Month, with the headline 'Acknowledged as one of the leading authors of to-day he has surpassed even himself in his new novel'. Advances were 14,000 copies and Foyles Book Club took 15,000 copies as its February Book of the Month. The novel spans fifty years, from the 1880s to the present day (1930s), and describes the fortunes of three boys: William Harvest, the hero; Robert Whistler, who dreams of owning a chain of shops; and Richard Firth, who becomes a Liberal MP. They become entangled with four women: Julia, a French girl, who is loved by Harvest, but marries Whistler; Minna, the heroine, who flirts with suffragettes and with Firth, but loves Harvest; pretty, devoted Kitty, who marries Harvest; and Eileen, the insipid and neglected wife of Firth. We follow the events which link and then separate the various characters, through murder, greed, melodrama, seduction, embezzlement and death until,

as is usual with Swinnerton, the characters are rewarded according to their natures and:

Harvest and Minna have their Indian Summer of happiness after all. To the end these strangely different and discordant lives are skilfully dovetailed. Mr Swinnerton presents his people, scenes and situations with enviable ease and naturalness. He is a writer of distinguished prose; he has the sharpest of eyes for character. He is full of stimulating ideas. Above all, he has written a novel which is a first-rate story, from first to last, absorbing, solidly constructed - a most admirable piece of work.²⁵

There is a wide range of secondary characters, each presented fully and with care. Daddy Parkin befriends William Harvest as a child and watches him grow, and with his money and manipulations plays a large part in the fate of Minna and the three boys. After all their trials, the trio, in old age, accidentally meet on Brighton sea front and refuse to acknowledge each other. By using this event as a prologue, Swinnerton sets the scene for returning to the past to discover why this incident happened. Though it is not an original device, Swinnerton deftly uses the reader's heightened interest to develop his story. It is an extremely complex book, less psychological than usual and with more action. Despite this, and its length, it is totally absorbing and one of his successes, as evidenced by the fact that it was the first of his novels to be issued in paperback in the UK. The reviews on both sides of the Atlantic were excellent and paid tribute to its clarity, craftsmanship, its detail. On its length, *The Times* said:

'600 pages - and there is not a dull page in it'²⁶. *The Daily Telegraph* enthused about it. 'The characters ... still exist, solid and coloured and dynamic, long after the book has been closed and put away on a special shelf'.²⁷ *The Daily Mirror* called it 'a book, in short, to be grateful for in a world of slick, slipshod writing - the pondered, polished work of a living old master of fiction'.²⁸ Margery Allingham was moved to write a fan letter as was A J Cronin, who said 'Your book in its restraint and humanity has moved me deeply'.²⁹

The Boston Evening Transcript made two very perceptive points. Firstly, 'certain continental writers, given the same plot and situations, would have risen to greater emotional heights and reached lower depths of desperation, but such a method could not be his. Drama for him is under-statement'. And earlier: 'How will posterity regard Swinnerton, the novelist? One of our better-known critics once called him a first-class second-class novelist. This seems a bit harsh, for his latest novel refutes this description.'³⁰ *Harvest Comedy* was first-rate for its time, but the unknown critic in the quotation was remarkably astute and accurate in his prophetic judgement of Swinnerton's place in the history of fiction.

Swinnerton's *Observer* commitment took up his Sundays and Mondays whilst he read six books to be reviewed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. He found the work difficult. 'At present the OBSERVER job is hell. I am all out of practice. Can't read fast or write intelligently'. He aimed to give an honest appraisal of each novel 'but O my God I didn't know how bad novels were!'³¹ His correspondence was so copious that he found it difficult to note

in the small daily sections of his diary. Mrs Bennett spent most of the second half of the year with the family helping Mary with Olivia. Swinnerton travelled north twice to give a talk at Kendal Milne in Manchester on 28 September and one at the Edinburgh Book Exhibition on 11 November. The success of his last four works brought in £3226 in 1937 and his realisable assets were £4000, of which £2000 was withdrawn to be invested in a life insurance policy with the Scottish Widows fund for a joint annuity. That Christmas he was completely idle. Olivia had succeeded in changing a lifetime's routine.

Swinnerton had become an established man of letters and was sought after. In March 1938 Gollancz attempted to take him away from Hutchinson but the latter matched the offer of £1000 advance on three novels and Swinnerton stayed. He was elected onto the committee of the Royal Literary Fund and was invited by John Brophy to join a select band of authors to speak in favour of democracy and against fascism at a public meeting held by the Association of Writers for Intellectual Freedom. He publicly endorsed the meeting although he did not attend the rally. He did deliver an address to the third annual dinner of the Charles Lamb Society at the London Tavern, Fenchurch Street, where he talked about Lamb's work, his style, powers of criticism and about the man himself. He admitted that he had once helped William Macdonald edit Lamb's work for Dent and that he had held Lamb's letters briefly in his hands and in conclusion stated that Lamb was rightly one of the best loved authors in English literature.

Life revolved round Olivia. Babysitting and tennis were his relaxations from the book reviews and short stories, and his

letters included photographs of the child. An indication of his sense of responsibility for her can be seen in an article he wrote, 'What I want my Daughter to Be'. He did not want her to be smothered by her literary background, nor to become an upper-class intellectual. He aimed for her to be healthy, cheerful and quick-witted, sympathetic and graceful, but not cosseted or privileged. He wanted her to be modest and self-reliant as he was and believed she would be happy if she were 'considerate to other, modest, self-respecting and gently determined to walk alone'.³²

In June Swinnerton took a month off to devote to his family - spring-cleaning his studio, entertaining visitors, who now regularly filled the house, watching cricket and walking. Even though Olivia had a nanny at the time, Sybil, he could often be found on Sundays looking after her. On 28 September he spoke at the English Society in Bradford and on 20 October at Dent's Jubilee Dinner. With sadness he attended Hugh Dent's memorial service on 24 November, three days after his old friend and former employer had died. During that month he began to give form to a new novel, *The Two Wives*, before it was lost in the preparation for Christmas. His *Observer* pay of £86.6.8d per month gave him the steady income which he required and made up a large part of his £1800 earnings in 1938. Although in 1939 he would earn £2250, he felt, with the war looming, that another novel needed to be published to give him extra financial security.

The early months of 1939 were dominated by his novel although he found time to negotiate the purchase of half an acre of land behind Old Tokefield and to give his first radio talk on 3 April on the subject of 'Some New Novels'. In April he was asked to

present that year's Dent Memorial Lecture and in May he took out a lease on a house at 23, Reading Road, Brighton for his mother-in-law, but it would be terminated in the event of a war. He was also becoming increasingly concerned about the Pinkers activities, but Ralph Pinker assured him that despite Eric Pinker's problems in the USA, this would not affect Swinnerton's US royalties as they were paid direct from Doubleday.²³ However, the fact that the US office closed on 29 March undermined this reassurance.

The deadline for *The Two Wives* was approaching and only one third was completed. So Swinnerton took the drastic measures of taking a holiday from the *Observer* in June and taking Mary and Olivia to Brighton on the 9th, where they remained for a month. Without interruptions and responsibilities he could now devote himself to his work and a strict regime was established in order to finish the novel. He wrote long daily letters to Mary and these give a fascinating insight into a writer's craft. His nights were now unbroken, from 10 pm to 6 am. Over a cup of tea in bed he would review the progress of the previous day in his mind and reconsider the emotional development. Often he would think of better situations in these early hours and when he rose for breakfast at 8.15 am he would be ready to re-write. He aimed at 3000 words each day, but found 2000 to be his natural limit. The long restful nights and uninterrupted days relaxed him and improved his concentration. Any interruptions irritated him: signing the conveyance for the purchase of the land lost him a day's work, whilst bluebottles sharing his study greatly distracted him. His letters to Mary were filled with anecdotes about the cats, Eva's housekeeping, Brincklow's gardening and the

fruit and vegetable harvest. He missed Olivia and Mary, but was keen to remain alone whilst his novel was in progress.

One of the reasons for the lease on the Brighton house was to allow the Swinnertons to relax there, it being larger than Mrs Bennett's previous flat. Mary had taken a liking to it and began to explore the possibilities of moving there because it was so much easier to keep clean and the area offered a better social life. But Swinnerton was reluctant. He felt it was too small. His letters reflected his moods, happy when work was progressing well, emotional when an emotional point was reached, downcast when he reached a crucial point where decisions on plot and development had to be made. His need to complete was also financial. His commitments were heavy, with Mrs Bennett and Olivia to be cared for, but he was having to wait increasingly longer for his cheques from Pinker and this situation was slowly reaching a climax.

By the end of June he was feeling harassed again: three articles had been promised and were waiting attention; he needed an operation, which involved convalescence and his ailment was causing him discomfort³⁴; his typist, Ally Wilmott, was finding his writing increasingly difficult to read, so time was lost rewriting whole sections and he felt guilty at her distress; the prospect of war troubled him; he was concerned that Mary sounded unhappy and wanted to come home; and as the novel drew to a close he began to feel depressed. He had hoped Hutchinson would print 20,000 copies, but they were expecting a downsurge in sales because of the European situation. And with only 10,000 words left on the last day of June he admitted to a lack of motivation. But his letters were still full of humour, especially over little

incidents which he would later relate so successfully in *Reflections from a Village*.³⁵ Three days later the book was finished, but he was unhappy that the time pressure had ruined the ending. 'To write in this way is not to consolidate a literary reputation, and I must try to avoid such a rush another time'.³⁶ He left for Brighton on 7 July and relaxed there for a week before bringing his family home.

War broke out on 3 September and Swinnerton received a letter from the Ministry of Information advising him that they had listed his name for possible work and asked him not to undertake any form of national service without consulting them. Blackout preparations began, but on 18 September he left for Knaresborough for nine days to undergo an operation for hydrocele. On his return he offered Old Tokefield to friends like Jimmy Horsnell to escape the danger, but his first guest was a schoolteacher who arrived on 2 October. He began work on the Dent Memorial lecture, which was to be *The Reviewing and Criticism of Books*, but it was cancelled. However he produced a 10,000 word lecture, Secker wrote the foreword and Dent published it at the end of the year. It was to have been the ninth Memorial Lecture. They were begun in 1931 by Hugh Dent as a memorial to his father and this was to have been the first after Hugh's death. However, the London Council had forbidden large crowds to congregate in places like the Stationers' Hall because of the War. The thrust of the lecture was the difference between criticism and reviewing. To Swinnerton criticism was 'an immediate and provisional estimate of performance', whilst reviewing was a retrospective valuation on the achievement of the work as a whole. To support his argument he looked through history at critics such

as Coleridge and reviewers like Macaulay, Croker and Jeffrey. To him Sainte-Beuve was the first reviewer to amalgamate genuine criticism into his work. Swinnerton examined the types of reviewers prevalent in the twentieth century, such as the hack, the 'star' reviewer, the clique reviewer and believed that with Arnold Bennett's appointment to the *Evening Standard* the whole system received an overhaul. He concluded with an examination of the factors which influenced reviewers at the end of the 1930s.

This was a succinct and informed paper, bringing together parts of articles he had written and published over the years. The content was an honest representation of his own views. One strongly held opinion concerned unsolicited manuscripts, and he received many as his connection with publishing houses was well known. He resented this intrusion and wrote to Chatto in an effort to stop them.³⁷ Yet writers wanted his opinion. Denton Welch appreciated praise he had received from 'an author and publisher whose literary judgements were respected throughout England and America'.³⁸ John Hadfield of Dent's occasionally sent him books to review because he appreciated the 'care and generosity with our novels, and cannot help marvelling at the pains you go to in the selection of the books your review'.³⁹ And when hearing that Swinnerton would be unable to review a book because of a holiday, Hadfield wrote 'It is just too bad that you will be unable to review it. In fact if we had not already committed ourselves to publication in June I would have recommended postponing publication until your return to duty'.⁴⁰ Such was the respect in which Swinnerton was held. When the Publishers Advertising Circle invited him to talk about 'Reading and Reviewing in war-time' on

14 November 1939, they considered him a great draw as he knew 'the truth about advertising better than we do ourselves'.⁴¹

The Two Wives was published at the beginning of the War. It examines the life of a successful comic actor, Sam Barnabas, his elderly mother, brother Hugh and sister Louisa. Sam is sensitive, aware of the feelings of other people and susceptible to criticism. He makes a disastrous marriage and is soon enchanted by a young aspiring playwright, Daphne Lobb. Meanwhile Hugh has begun a secret affair and when his wife dies mysteriously he is arrested on suspicion of murder. Sam leaves his wife Sybil for Daphne and Sybil kills herself in despair leaving Sam free to remarry. But Daphne begins to change, showing her selfish nature and Sam realises he has made another mistake. Successful plays cannot save his decline, Hugh is convicted of murder, and Daphne bears a child by another man. But in the background is Mary Bryan, Old Mrs Barnabas's companion, a gentle, kind woman, past her first youth and without expectations. She supports him through his troubles and eventually brings him peace and happiness.

It is not surprising that Rouse found it an unpleasant book. 'There is a plethora of sordid sexual intrigue, misery, selfishness, weakness, hypocrisy, amorality, perversion, and plain and fancy meanness'.⁴² However the plot and characters are well drawn, though the detailed examination of the theatre and the court of law obscures the smooth progress of events. It is a mature book and the denouement is compulsive, more gripping and less ponderous than the early chapters. It is tempting to speculate that Sybil and Daphne represent Marguerite and Dorothy

Cheston Bennett, or that Sybil is Helen Dircks and Mary Swinnerton is her namesake, Mary Bryan.

Between 1933 and 1939 Swinnerton wrote many articles for various periodicals. A selection of seventeen was examined to see what the public's expectations were and how he fulfilled them and also to gain an insight into his opinions and beliefs. Many of them deal with books: a look at the classics in 'New Lamps for Old'; 'Authorship' examines the various stages through which a novel travels before it reaches the shops; 'What Novels can Teach' examines the wisdom which can be obtained from the best fiction available; 'Literature 1910 - 1935' dwells on the death of the old order and the nature of the new fiction of Joyce, Forster, Woolf and Huxley; 'The Art and Practice of Reviewing' shows Swinnerton at his best, exposing his expertise and this article formed the basis of his Dent Memorial Lecture; 'Variations on Form in the Novel' looks at the different types of novels being written and gives a panoramic view of European literature; 'On Book Tokens' promotes the benefits of giving tokens as a means of keeping the habit of reading alive. With the exception of the last article, these appeared in serious journals and showed Swinnerton's strength in his wide range of literary knowledge and they consolidate his reputation as a wise man of letters.

Other articles were in a lighter vein, many dealing with his love of cats which blossomed when he moved to Cranleigh and was kept by several felines over the years. He came to appreciate their distinct and interesting characters and was happy to extol them in writing. A miscellany of light-hearted articles deals with wide-ranging subjects: the ideal heroine in fiction; the curse of

noise; alcohol abuse; the benefits of a good marriage; the negative side of tourism. Their interest is in their revelation of Swinnerton's view of how society is changing and his wish to retain the old order.⁴³ Swinnerton felt equally at home with both serious journalism and entertaining essays. In this way he reached a wide range of public taste. He was a sought after contributor and widely read.

Chapter 14

HUGH WALPOLE: A DIFFICULT FRIENDSHIP

The friendship between Swinnerton and Walpole was complex and curious, reflecting their differing natures and attitudes to society and life. It spanned the years from 1915, when they first met until Walpole's death in 1941. According to Swinnerton's autobiography, Walpole was an emotional, cheerful, generous, good-humoured, shrewd and energetic man, who collected friends and acquaintances, often being friendly with men who actually disliked him. On the other hand, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, paints him as a man who took offence easily, who dreaded hostile criticism and whilst on one side he was a warm and enthusiastic friend, on the other, he was self-pitying, absurdly resentful of criticism, and at times recklessly malicious.

Swinnerton's character was much more reserved. His letters to Walpole were always cheerful, full of chatty gossip and the literary scene, but whereas Walpole would often become emotional and showed exactly what his feelings were, Swinnerton's taciturnity as far as his emotions were concerned was always painfully evident, and it was surprising that Walpole could maintain such an intimate relationship with one so reticent, for so long.

In some ways the men were literary twins, both being born in 1884 and, according to Walpole, both apparently submitted first novels for the same competition early on in their careers', both published first novels within a month of each other², but Walpole's star rose first.³ Although no letters have been found dated before 1915, Swinnerton states in his autobiography that

they first wrote and met in 1912. Sir Rupert Hart-Davis in his biography of Walpole⁴ puts the date of the first meeting as 1915 and contents of existing letters tend to support Hart-Davis. The first known letter arrived from Walpole on Good Friday 1915, in which he praised Swinnerton's novel *On the Staircase* as a 'fine piece of work. ... Your book has given me the most extraordinary sense of charm and beauty - a charm which is utterly your own secret'. He wrote again in September 1915 with further praise, this time for *The Chaste Wife* and invited Swinnerton to lunch in December 1915.

From that time until 1926 their friendship flourished. They met regularly, especially after Walpole had taken a lease on a flat in Ryder Street, London after 1918 and in between wrote lengthy letters, which consisted of literary gossip, their social movements, opinions on current books and detailed criticism of each other's works. Although they respected each other's talents, they did not always approve of each other's writings.⁵ Some of Walpole's most interesting letters were sent from Russia, where he had gone to serve in the Red Cross in Galicia and later to be in charge of the Anglo-Russian Propaganda Bureau in Petrograd. His descriptions of the first Russian Revolution are highly emotional and vivid. In contrast Swinnerton retained the precise, unemotional tone which characterised his correspondence, although he did express some more tender sentiments on occasions. 'I was not able to finish The Secret City until last night. ... I read it throughout with great kindness of feeling - that is, not feeling kind, or that it was kind of me to read it, but with affection towards yourself'.⁶

By 1917 Swinnerton had established himself as a promising new writer and an element of jealousy seemed to have crept into Walpole's letters. 'Your bloody rudeness in not answering a letter I sent to you a week ago (especially as it contained a serious invitation) confirms what I hear as to your present haughtiness'.⁷ But Swinnerton was up to the jibe and responded with humour:

My bloody rudeness was concluded yesterday, when I wrote to you. ... I am pleased to hear that I have got haughty. When we meet you must tell me who says so. I will tear his tripe out. ... Well, dear Hugh, I feel quite amiable towards you, from my olympian peak. Just a little condescending to all the world, perhaps; a little disposed to stoop in order to see my fellow-creatures crawling by. ... But que voulez vous? When one's head is so suddenly large as mine one tends to live in a world of one's own. Perhaps it will pass. Perhaps I shall grow so intolerable to all but myself that I shall live alone with my egomania. Till that day comes we will hope still for recovery.⁸

When Swinnerton married for the first time in 1920 Walpole heard the news whilst travelling abroad and was deeply offended. 'If it be true as I heard from many sources that you have been married for over a fortnight and have never told me a word about it you are no friend of mine and I shall never forgive you.'⁹ Swinnerton's reticence to a man as open as Walpole was hard to comprehend and he took it personally.

Because Walpole travelled widely over the next few years, their relationship necessarily progressed in writing. Walpole

increasingly sought consolation and encouragement over his sometimes difficult relations with other people, whilst Swinnerton continued to gossip. He had a predilection for stories about other people and a biting wit in company even at a friend's expense, although he always maintained that his humour was entirely innocent and never meant to offend. People accepted this trait in Swinnerton as can be seen from a letter Bennett wrote to Walpole: 'Your beloved, sardonic, cruel, realistic, imperturbable, callous, remorseless Frank is writing his new novel'.¹⁰ but Walpole's nature was too sensitive to cope with it.

Their relationship was already showing some signs of strain when Walpole wrote to Swinnerton in September 1924 complaining that he had not heard from him recently and all he could learn was that he was married again and living in the country. Swinnerton replied with some asperity:

I am glad to get your letter, though sorry to hear of your unavailing quest for news of me. I don't believe you asked the right people. Arnold, A A Milne, Secker, P P Howe, and about 28 other people including the Lamonts, have made my wife's acquaintance. ... But why didn't you step round to Chatto's, and ask for ME? In your last letter you announced that you were coming to London in, I think, May, and that you would then call. You didn't call. I am always at Chatto's on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and only leap down here on the Thursday evening to bury myself with husbandry. I think you ought to have called.'

In 1926 both men found themselves touring the USA on lecture tours at the same time. Hart-Davis in his biography of Walpole writes that malicious gossip brought about a cooling of their friendship. The details are obscure but Walpole wrote a hurt and angry letter to Swinnerton accusing him of making fun of him in public and in private. Swinnerton defended himself vigorously, but the damage was done. The three letters which catalogue Walpole's emotional turmoil reveal a great deal not only about himself, but also, when reading between the lines, about Swinnerton's behaviour. The first was written on 11 November 1926 from Cleveland:

Dont let this letter interfere in any way with our affectionate personal relations but I have been urged to write and I think it as well for both our sakes that I should. It is only a continuation of the old subjects.

During the last three weeks I have been pestered with letters and remarks about your allusions to me in your lectures and private talks and yesterday morning I got two press cuttings to the same effect one saying that you said that I said that you were only mock modest. There is apparently a funny story going round about Monty and myself and 'Who's Who' implying that we are obsessed with our own importance - and so on. Now, as we agreed in London, kind people always try to make all the trouble they can. I understand your sense of humour but the Americans dont. You know by this time that these tours are difficult enough anyway and it doesn't help me that you who know me so well should be making me out ... a bloody fool. Moreover it reacts badly on you. You have

been making all America laugh apparently with your imitation of Arnold's stammer. Now they laugh at the moment but wonder after what sort of friend you are! I do know America better than you and they laugh and love you at the moment but are critical when you are gone. Dear Frank I love you very much and believe that I have no more loyal friend in the world. Nor have you a more loyal friend than I. But I hate to be told that you are disloyal to me.

Swinerton's reply is lost, but Walpole wrote again on 16 November:

I haven't got persecution mania - I've never bothered my head about anyone in this way before because no one has ever brought these tales about anyone else to me. I wrote largely because I thought you should be aware of what was interfering with our friendship. Indeed don't you think the fact that you've listened a hundred times to nasty remarks about me simply gives you away? I've never listened to a single nasty remark about you in my life because people knew that I was your friend. ... Dear Frank, as you have taken the letter so bitterly I see that I was most unadvised to write it. Are you unaware altogether of the friends you have lost in the past by your wit and humour?

Now it appears that you wish to lose another. And I think as a matter of fact that to have a friend who can listen a hundred times to things said against one isn't much fun.

Again Swinerton's reply cannot be traced and eight days later Walpole responds from New York:

I suppose a certain naivete in me prompted my first letter to you. I really did feel that evidences were strong enough to prove to me that you were doing something that was hurting us both. You wrote back hurting me where you could. ... There let it end. I apologise for my letter to you but I also put it on record as a fact that alone among my intimate friends you seem to give the impression of sneering and mocking me behind my back. ... I suppose people simply dont understand how fond of me you really are! But I do and will endeavour in the future to remember only that. ... Let us never mention this again. I swear that I will not.

The incident affected both men to the extent that only a handful of letters were exchanged over the next eleven years. They were now short and mainly concerned with literary matters and condolences on personal events. In his diary on 23 September 1927 Walpole described Swinnerton's friendship as too untrustworthy. Swinnerton always maintained that the reason they seldom met in later years was because he lived in the country, whilst Walpole's career took him all over the world. He claimed that both were well content with the progress of their friendship and it remained unimpaired. The intervening years mellowed the memory of that hurtful time and in 1937 Walpole writes, 'I must send you a line for two reasons - one that I think the first half of your autobiography absolutely delightful. ... Secondly to tell you of the pleasure your words about our friendship has given me. ... I assure you that I feel as warm in my affection towards you as twenty years ago.'¹²

In 1941 shortly before his death Walpole had been going through some old letters and had found a batch from Swinnerton. 'I reflected on our friendship and although we seldom see one another thought how fine a thing it had been for me. ... But I am glad we have been friends for so long. I know that I have been often a comic figure to you almost always a comic for whom you have had a certain tenderness'³ In reply Swinnerton allowed a rare expression of emotion to appear in print:

I was very pleased with your letter. Thank you. It brought back very exciting days, and our old discussions and splendours, and made me happy. ... The truth is that you and I are like brooks - we go on for ever. The other don't. I shouldn't be surprised if the reason proved to be that we have an advantage in simplicity. That is, what has made me laugh at you, and what has enabled you, I hope, to laugh at me, is the naivete that lasts. Besides being simple, and not so simple, of course, so that we have known that we most wanted, and gone for it, we have really enjoyed our lives. You couldn't have stood me at all if you had been seriously touchy as people like Rose Macaulay and Forster - so sacredly vain; - and you have always forgiven. As for me, I have always been very fond of you or I couldn't have laughed. So all's well.'⁴

Four months later Walpole was dead.

Both men had a great deal in common and were never at a loss for topics of discussion and there was obviously a bond of friendship and mutual respect. In his autobiography Swinnerton writes that whilst Walpole was often exasperated with his teasing

and ridicule he was always patient with him. Certainly with other men Swinnerton achieved a greater degree of intimacy and trust, but he always thought of Walpole with kindness and affection. The root of the problem probably lay in their differing personalities. Swinnerton was outwardly unemotional and did have a weakness for mocking his friends, whether maliciously or not. Being stoical himself, he would have found Walpole's hyper-sensitivity a weakness. On the other hand, Walpole 'wished above all things to be liked, and only when he felt himself mocked or denigrated did the fundamental self-distrust and timidity which underlay that robust and confident exterior turn to rancour'.¹⁵

Chapter 15.

THE WAR YEARS 1940 - 1945

In the first half of 1940 Swinnerton finally severed his working relationship with the Pinkers, who had become his agents shortly after he had begun writing. With a certain formality Swinnerton had sent two copies of *The Happy Family* to J B Pinker in 1912¹ and a friendship was soon struck up, especially with Pinker's sons Eric and Ralph. Pinker was responsible for handling all of Swinnerton's publications and controlled the income from his publishers, Hutchinson and Doubleday, as well as from his short stories and articles. Swinnerton, however, kept a tight hold on what he wanted and his correspondence with them was always to the point and he clearly stated where he stood in relation to the various problems he encountered over the sale of his works. The London office was at Talbot House, Arundel Street and was run by Mr Wicken. At first Swinnerton dealt with J.P. and would lunch with him on the occasion of his visits to London. It was a friendly but professional relationship and letters show a side of Swinnerton, when dealing with financial matters, which was not so apparent at other times. He kept a close watch on negotiations with his publishers and the progress of foreign translation rights. It was he who pushed his agent to change publishers from Methuen to Hutchinson in 1918 and later encouraged Ralph to find a way out of his contract with the latter, when they began to treat his work carelessly in 1927. *Summer Storm* had been a victim of poor sales and Swinnerton blamed Hutchinsons for their poor promotion, poor quality printing and bad timing, when they launched the book just before Christmas of that year.²

In the 1920s, after J P Pinker's death he wrote either to Eric or Ralph. His letters were still forthright and though his instructions were often rambling, as a result of Swinnerton writing as he thought, he always stated his viewpoint and made his requests for action plain. The letters dealt almost exclusively with business and financial matters concerning his work. He kept meticulous records of his income and was able at all times to note down exactly what he had received in royalties and advances for each novel, short story and article. Mr Wicken died in 1930, at a time when Swinnerton was concerned about his future with *The Evening News*. Although he agreed that his articles had brought him good publicity, he felt that, despite his appreciation of the regular income, the money was not enough to cover the enormous amount of time Swinnerton expended in the novel reviews. In the end Swinnerton had approached Fitzhugh of *The Evening News* himself.³

Pinker renegotiated Swinnerton's contract with Hutchinson in 1934 and again in 1939, at which time Swinnerton was to earn a £1000 advance for each novel. With Doubleday's advance in the USA to add to this, Swinnerton felt that with a novel a year at these prices, plus miscellaneous articles, he could give up his *Observer* commitments and have a little more leisure time. It was to be the last major negotiations which Pinkers would undertake on his behalf. His cheques had begun to be delayed and rumours had reached his ears that the agency was in difficulties. Both Ralph and Eric had often dined with Swinnerton and the latter felt no personal animosity towards them. However, it was clear by the end of 1939 that he was not receiving the money due to him and on 23

February 1940 he wrote to Ralph reluctantly severing links with the agency on grounds of non-payment of cheques and at that time informed every interested party. Pinker responded in distress offering to reduce his commission from 10% to 5%. Eric, who had looked after the US operation, had just been jailed for embezzlement. Whilst assuring Ralph of his personal respect for him, Swinnerton put the matter in the hands of Withers & Co., who took out a court order to try and obtain the missing monies. In February Swinnerton had also informed Doubleday that they should pay his royalties direct and that Pinker was no longer his agent. Mrs Vonnie Pinker wrote to Swinnerton on 24 September informing him that she had taken out divorce proceedings against Ralph on grounds of his drinking and financial irresponsibility. So ended a business relationship, which had helped Swinnerton manage his affairs and he now had to organise his own deals, which were an added burden to him at a time when he had personal decisions to make. Swinnerton showed a typical generosity about the affair. He felt that Pinker had 'got into trouble over a single transaction, in which he used in an emergency some monies reserved on account of Phillips Oppenheim. Otherwise his record was absolutely clean'.⁴

At first the War did not seem to disrupt his routine, except for making it less hectic. He built an air raid shelter at the back of the house and planned to remain at Old Tokefield, but Olivia 'got very frightened of planes and pooters at home, and I considered sending her, with Mary, to America (several kind offers). But when I broached the subject Mary said we should all stick together and I was advised to bring them to Yorkshire.'⁵

Before arranging the move he wrote a preface to Arnold Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale*, wrote a broadcast talk on Conrad, talked on the subject of *My Ideal Novel* at the Tomorrow Club, where he sat next to Margaret Irwin, spoke at the Foyle's Literary Luncheon on 9 May along with J B Priestley and Harold MacMillan, corresponded with Dylan Thomas, who had written to thank him for a financial donation, and finally he began a new novel *The Fortunate Lady* on 1 May 1940.

At the end of June the Swinnertons left for Skipton and Hebden Bridge in search of a home for the duration of the War. As well as sightseeing and writing, Swinnerton managed to find a suitable cottage at Grassington. He took on Fellsdale for 15/- a week on 22 July. They returned to Cranleigh to pack, prepared the cottage with loaned furniture, bought carpets and moved in on 1 August, leaving Old Tokefield in the hands of the gardener and housekeeper, who were to look after Mrs Bennett^e, Swinnerton's Aunt Clara, Phil and family, an old friend of Mary's and eleven others, a dog and four cats, all of whom paid nothing for their accommodation and did not have enough respect for their surroundings. Mrs Bennett was taken ill and had to be admitted to Guildford Hospital. The Swinnertons were homesick, but had regular news from Brincklow, the gardener. They had exchanged their home for a tiny, modern house, where the garden shed became the studio. It was quiet, however, and Mary grew fond of Yorkshire. Swinnerton was able to write, slowly, but in peace and by the end of the year the novel was well advanced. Air raid sirens reached Grassington and Swinnerton was worried about Olivia's sensitivity to the noise. It was this fear, which kept him from returning to Old

Tokefield, even though he felt he ought to be there to support Mrs Bennett, who was thought to need an operation.

His work would be interrupted by chores and caring for Olivia, whose developing character was a real joy to him. However, he was not sleeping well and lacked the peace of mind to construct his novel properly, because he was burdened with worries, which centred on the people at Old Tokefield, on whether he should sell the house and stay in Yorkshire, or close the house up. He worried that should he die his responsibilities would be in disarray.⁷ He admitted he was in need of a holiday.⁸ But he had been cheered by two extra royalty cheques from the USA for *The Two Wives*, which boosted his 1940 earnings to £1900, and which eased his financial concerns a little. Also as the year closed his novel was finally progressing well, although he felt it was bad and would not re-establish his reputation after the poor sales of *The Two Wives*.⁹

The beginning of 1941 brought heavy snow, which kept Swinnerton at his desk and resulted in the completion of *The Fortunate Lady* on 14 February. At the beginning of March he made a trip to London, where he spent the first night at the Howe's at Ockham, Surrey, the second with L A G Strong at Godalming and the third at Old Tokefield, where harmony was noticeably absent. In town he saw many of his friends, including Secker and Miss Bowerman of the Ministry of Information (MOI). It seems it was Hamish Hamilton, who had recommended Swinnerton to the MOI and Swinnerton felt he was doing something useful and at the same time was enjoying himself. Smart ladies in khaki drove him to widespread venues, where he would speak on the subject of the USA to Rotary Clubs and open exhibitions. The MOI in return found him

useful, increased his appointments and said he 'spoke with authority'.¹⁰

As a postscript to the Pinker affair, Ralph informed Swinnerton in March that a receiving order for bankruptcy had been made on 27 February and asked Swinnerton to have a *proof of debt* sworn before a commissioner of oaths as the trustees may be able to pay him 5/- against the pound for outstanding debts'', which were estimated to amount to approximately £43. On 2 April he did so. Pinker was eventually sent to jail in Maidstone and the business was taken over by the old cashier Richard Steele, then by Hope Leresche and finally by Tessa Sayle. Swinnerton stayed with the company and Tessa Sayle was his last agent.

As well as work for the MOI, who had now switched him from Rotary Clubs to war weapons and addresses to miners about the progress of the War, which Swinnerton admitted he knew nothing about, he was beginning an association with the BBC and on 9 May he gave a broadcast about Arnold Bennett. The beginning of June brought memories of the past, with the news that Walpole had died. A sad Swinnerton remembered, 'It can't be more than a couple of months since he was writing to me about how he'd been re-reading my old letters and feeling flushes of old affection for me and asking when we could meet ... A strange life, uneasy, jovial, emotional ... Mary ... has always thought I was hard on Hughie.'¹² Mary was also aware that Swinnerton was only four months younger than Walpole and the latter's death troubled her own security.

Now that *The Fortunate Lady* was safely delivered to the publishers Swinnerton needed a rest from the hectic duties for the MOI and the commitments of book reviews for *The Observer*. He also

travelled down to London and Cranleigh roughly every six weeks and was unable to stay at the Reform Club, which had temporarily closed.¹³ He needed time to compose his new novel, *Thankless Child*, (briefly called *Thankless Daughter*) which he had commenced on 29 May. His only relaxations were walking in the beautiful countryside and by the river nearby and the time he spent basking in the development of his much loved daughter. In November he was so unwell that *The Observer* gave him three weeks holiday and although he took the opportunity to work on his novel, he could not really appreciate the rest.

In connection with his war work Swinnerton wrote patriotic articles for the newspapers and appeared in them himself. In 'Citizen, Defend Yourself' he stated that Britain could only win the War if people had a proper knowledge of what was happening. This they could ensure by reading the right materials. 'Citizen, defend your country. But, in order to do this effectively, first defend yourself by learning what books alone can communicate - truth.' This was a strange article, which contrasted oddly to one which appeared roughly at the same time, in which he looked at wartime in the countryside, where the influx of townpeople and the presence of the army brought the only difference to the normal way of life to country people.¹⁴ An MOI trip took him to Glasgow, Prestwick, Ayr, and Edinburgh in December.

His income for 1941 had risen to a healthy £2400, partly boosted by the publication of *The Fortunate Lady*. This very unsatisfactory and unsatisfying novel was based on a true story told to Swinnerton by a friend and concerns Catherine Mund, one of three children, whose life we follow from the cradle to old age.

She is beset from first to last by misfortune and ill feeling from the people around her and it is only her gentleness of character and utter goodness, which carries her through. Unloved at home, she marries Austin Westall, who is unfaithful to her. Parallel to her life runs the story of Lucien, a half-French orphan, who is raised near to Catherine by Dr and Mrs Russell. Austin is his friend and Lucien is appalled by the way he treats Catherine. He is preoccupied with money and becomes involved with the mysterious Mr Montgomery, who offers him funds and eventually swindles him. After rejecting Elizabeth, Catherine's sister, he marries Lucy, who dies of fever, which she contracted on honeymoon in France. Eventually Austin also dies and Catherine, now blind, marries Lucien and achieves happiness in old age. It is difficult to imagine what Swinnerton's frame of mind must have been to write such a disagreeable and sinister book. Rouse wrote:

Relief from the oppressively ominous is provided in the portrayal of Catherine, Swinnerton's conception of virtue and charm in woman. Catherine's family and their "friends", however, might not be conceivable as other than monsters were it not for Swinnerton's mastery of comic effect which he uses to endow them with humanity, in spite of themselves.¹⁵

Yet Catherine's goodness is unconvincing and her help for Austin's mistress questionable. Austin too, is portrayed as too "nice" in the early pages of the novel, so his development into a cad is not very credible. This family saga is predictable and follows something of a pattern of his earlier works. There is little

examination of various aspects of character. The structure is loose and not all ends are finally tied. Swinnerton's examination of ingratitude and the influences of youth on character are not sufficient to create a satisfying novel. One is left with the belief that Catherine deserved a better fate than a few years of peace at the end with a reformed Lucien.

The disagreeable feeling left by the novel was not shared by everyone, however. Norah Hoult was much taken with it:

It is an achievement of which I should feel very proud if I'd done it. So full of unforgettable people, so much flavour to each scene, and a total effect of richness and amplitude that is very rare. It is as if you had brought a Victorian parlor crowded with things and people to life. I feel very respectful indeed.¹⁶

She goes on to praise his portrayal of evil people, such as Catherine's sisters Hester and Elizabeth, but is dissatisfied with the unlikeable Lucien and is much happier with the simpler characterisation of Austin.

Richard Church admired the book's construction and Swinnerton's craftsmanship. 'The clean, scrupulous prose, the constant flow of narrative, the accumulation of dramatic colour, and the economic drawing-in of characters ... your novel moved me deeply, unhappily. It is tense with an almost fierce alertness.'¹⁷ Swinnerton himself admitted that he had not brought the novel off, putting it down to his coldness of personality. He had tried to give this novel more of an Elizabethan tone, but believed he had been unable to submerge his realistic streak.¹⁸ In May 1942 Norah

Hoult informed Swinnerton that the novel had been banned in Eire¹⁹, a fitting postscript to a lesser work.

In the first months of 1942 Swinnerton worked steadily on his various commitments. In March he made his first trip South that year and his letters home now included notes to Olivia. The letters were full of news of friends: Viola Garvin, the L A G Strongs, Jimmy Horsnell and Hamish Hamilton. There was also news of Old Tokefield, the villagers, the domestics and the garden. Back in Grassington he received a contract from the BBC and over a three month period from April, he did a series of seven broadcasts for the overseas North American Service either from London or Leeds.²⁰ On 19 April he finished *Thankless Child*, attended RLF committee meetings in London and began to fear for his work for *The Observer*. He learnt that Viola Garvin and her father had been removed from the paper and in December he saw his fears justified when he received a letter from Ivor Brown, the new editor, explaining that the decrease in revenue at the newspaper, resulting from a paper shortage, was forcing it to cut the pay for reviewing. He offered to either release Swinnerton or keep him on at a reduced rate. Swinnerton preferred to retire and agreed to write until the second week in 1943 so a replacement could be found.

He managed to write a few articles and one short story 'The Verdict'²¹, which showed him using the medium to the full with shocks and a surprise ending. One of his articles, 'The Writer in Wartime'²² was especially interesting because it described the work of the MOI. In it he looked at the benefits of using writers to further the cause of information in war time, as Arnold Bennett

had done in the First World War, a theme he had used in earlier articles. The aim of the MOI was to disseminate information to keep people informed, despite the reluctance of the Services to release accurate facts. As younger writers had joined up, it was left to older ones, like the fifty seven-year old Swinnerton, to help the MOI. His role was to put forward his own point of view about events and to be approachable to the public. Others were Phyllis Bentley, Theodora Benson, C Day Lewis, C Arnot Robertson, Arthur Calder-Marshall, E M Delafield, Sylvia Thompson, Bernard Newman and Naomi Jacob. He believed the BBC was serving the same function, with Rebecca West, Norman Collins, John Brophy and J B Priestly as the frontmen. He received no travel expenses or any other pay, but fulfilled his role as his contribution to the war effort.

In October, assured by A G Gardiner that no further air attacks were likely in the South of England, he brought his family back to Old Tokefield for the rest of the year, although trips North were still necessary for MOI work - to Dudley in November and Harrogate in December. He still made broadcasts for the BBC, but in Cranleigh he was more concerned about the state of the house and called in a decorator to quote for the redecoration of it.

Swinnerton had an excellent year financially, receiving £2940, helped by the release of *Thankless Child*. Rouse thought it 'a brilliant and many-faceted study of the development of young Frankie Snapes and the downfall of her father, Mordred, the aging and insecure advertising manager for a large store.'²³ A very small range of characters allows for a greater degree of

introspection than was possible in his "family saga" novels. However, this philosophising at times is pompous and indigestible. The other main protagonists are Mordred's friend, Scoble, who appears to be a bachelor, when in fact he is married with children. Kyle Lovat is Scoble's artist lodger, who loves Frankie and has to wait patiently while Frankie, increasingly alienated from her jealous, tyrannical father, finds out about the realities of life through two unsuitable love affairs, before she is able to appreciate Kyle's feelings. In the end Mordred is left alone after both Frankie and his sister Agnes have deserted him, and Scoble has died. The book opens with Mordred sitting grumpily in his local pub, unappreciative of his life, family and friends and ends with the same scene, only this time he has been instrumental in ruining his life and ending up a lonely old man. Although Scoble and Mordred are well drawn, it is difficult to sympathise with their predicaments and Swinnerton's "coldness" comes across once again. However, not everyone found this yet another unsatisfactory novel. Rouse again: 'Swinerton handles Thankless Child with a suggestion of amusement mingled with pity and tinged at times with contempt ... [it] is a very good novel. It scintillates in spite of its unscintillant material. At times the human relationships somehow seem to glow and flash like lightning and reverberate as thunder.'²⁴

A G Gardiner wrote to Swinnerton on 7 October 1942 describing Frankie as a 'minx' and regretting that Kyle, whom he liked should surrender to her in the end. He went on to say 'the climax is strong and the pages swarm with life'. Norah Hoult considered that 'The central character, Mordreth, [sic] is a great triumph. Your

very ruthlessness, nothing set down in malice, but certainly nothing extenuated, has made him a great feat of character creation'. She 'read it with more concentrated fascination than I have read any book for a long time, the speed is so rapid and the clash of character strikes with so much excitement.'²⁵

At the beginning of 1943 Swinnerton was back at Grassington because Old Tokefield was not habitable while it remained unrepaired and undecorated. Builders who had been contracted to do the work had found it necessary to give priority to war damage elsewhere. For six more months Mary and Olivia would remain in Wharfedale, 'one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen', where 'the kindness we have been shown, particularly in Grassington, has been beyond description'.²⁶

However, he became rather peripatetic during this time, spending ten days in Yorkshire and ten at Old Tokefield, one of the reasons for his trips to Cranleigh being the need to find peace in which to write his next novel *A Woman in Sunshine*, which had been commenced at the beginning of the year and which was now well behind schedule. Another was the fact that he had been contracted by the BBC once again to do six more broadcasts during April, May and June in London, for which he received £12 per talk. These programmes were well received by the public and his friends were very complimentary about them.

A great deal of publicity was being given to Pinker's problems and Swinnerton was surprised at himself for having been so gullible. The garden, the cats and voluminous correspondence distracted him from his novel, but he was enjoying being back home, his staff were delighted with his presence and, with the

soldiers gone, the only outward signs of war were the occasional planes which passed overhead. However, a painful shoulder ailment, muscular rheumatism, had become so bad by May that he needed extensive ultra-violet treatment and anti-neuritis tablets. His GP Dr Willis had called in a German orthopaedist for a second opinion and the latter gave the cause as overwork and the damp Spring. Mary and Olivia were also unwell, so Swinnerton returned to Yorkshire to look after Olivia whilst Mary convalesced. He was reluctant to leave them for his broadcasts and a *Desert Island Discs* programme with Roy Plomley. His much amended manuscript for this programme, which went out on 19 June 1943, still survives. All his first choices of music were played and he talked about his youthful paralysis from diptheria, his love of the theatre and of music, remembered walks on Hampstead Heath, his early days at Old Tokefield, and Olivia. His choice of records reflected each period, the William Tell Overture from his earliest years, through Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, Chopin's *Ballade No. 3 in A flat major*, Saint-Saens's *Danse Macabre*, Tchaikowsky's *Serenade in C major*, Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat major*, and finally Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*.

The war news was hopeful and Swinnerton was now anxious to go home with his family as soon as possible. This he achieved in June and there he was able to complete the treatment on his arm and resume work on his novel again. Mrs Bennett, now out of hospital, arrived in July. On 31 August the family returned to Yorkshire to give notice and to arrange their affairs and Pickfords, the removal firm, brought their belongings home on the 27 September.

With pleasant notices in the Yorkshire press regretting his departure giving him a send-off, the Swinnertons were home at last. New worries manifested themselves. His life long friend, Percy Howe was ill and hospitalised in University College hospital. Swinnerton visited and wrote. Mrs Bennett too had not long to live. With his novel not ready for a 1943 publication, Swinnerton's income was only £1500. One short story was published in December 1943, entitled 'The Chinese Carpet', a pleasant tale examining goodness in human nature, which finds its reward in the end.

Early in the New Year Swinnerton finally completed *A Woman in Sunshine*, and he immediately began *English Maiden*. Three deaths followed in February and March, which caused distress and demands on his time. His mother-in-law died on 15 February 1944 and Mary remained in Brighton after the funeral on 18 February tidying up the effects. Swinnerton's elderly Aunt Clara also died on 7 March. For some years he had been corresponding with her, helping her financially and housing her at Old Tokefield in the early years of the War. P P Howe had spent his last days at his farm in Ockham and he died there on 20 March; Swinnerton sent a moving tribute to him to the *Bookseller* as an obituary. Howe had married and moved to Horsley, east of Guildford, before moving to Ockham, which was so close to Swinnerton's home that they were able to meet there as well as in London. His daughter, Angela Chinnery remembers visiting Old Tokefield about once a year in the late 1930s. They were known as Uncle Swin and Auntie Knob and each year a Christmas present would arrive for her. Swinnerton did not like visiting much and Mrs Chinnery recalls only one occasion when he came to

Ockham. The children had been told to eat slowly because Swinnerton was such a story teller that he would extend the dinner - they were not allowed to finish before he did. She enjoyed listening to his tales, thought him full of humour and wit. He was always cheerful and the house was always filled with laughter. Mrs Howe was one of the regular recipients of an autographed copy of Swinnerton's latest book and even after Howe's death the children were still welcome at Old Tokefield and would visit in the 1960s with their own offspring. At the beginning of April Swinnerton received a further blow, when a telegram arrived from the *Evening News* asking him for an article on H G Wells, who was extremely ill, but this sadness was deferred as Wells struggled against his illness.

During this time the BBC, impressed with his popularity with radio listeners, invited him to give six broadcasts in the next quarter's series of book talks, but Swinnerton refused. He believed he had made a little contribution through them, but did not really accept that the public had taken him as a 'guide'. 'I know that many intelligent people do listen to these book talks ... I think it is possible that the effect of the voice on listeners, and the place of the reference to the pamphlets in my talk, may have helped a little - perhaps more than a similarly brief printed review would have done.'²⁷ But he no longer wished to continue with them. He also rejected Hamish Hamilton's proposal to be the editor of a new library of standard works in a post war venture. He preferred to spend time at home with Mary and watch Olivia grow. In May he gave a talk to the Refugee Centre in Guildford for the British Council and June brought noisy nights

with the invasion of France by the Allies. In July another of his short stories appeared, 'The Observation Post', which was published in Hutchinson's *Summer Pie*. It is a muddled and ambiguous story examining appearances and the fact that they often hide a different reality.

13 July brought the publication of *A Woman in Sunshine*. In August Swinnerton celebrated his sixtieth birthday, but this occasion did not disturb his routine. It was the flying bombs which succeeded in doing so, damaging Old Tokefield twice. Again Olivia reacted to the noise, which made her distressed and unwell. So Swinnerton gave her a great deal of attention, disappearing into his study for short bouts of correspondence and articles, the latter mainly scripts for the BBC South American Service. On 11 September an unscheduled return was made to Grassington to escape the proximity of the War. It was a holiday and there was much sightseeing and visits to old friends. A month later they returned home. Swinnerton's niece, Helen Rose had been staying. She was now married and had a daughter, Anna and during this time was often in the house. Swinnerton recommenced *English Maiden* in October, after judging a competition for Hutchinsons, which involved two weeks of reading manuscripts. A new correspondent had appeared, Winston Graham, with whom he had struck up a friendship based on their respect for each other's work. With *A Woman in Sunshine* being published, he maintained a passable income of £1600, only £300 of which came from BBC work and short pieces.

A Woman in Sunshine sold well. Doubleday was impressed with it and wanted to serialise it, so its publication in the USA was deferred until the Winter. Despite its popularity, reviews in the

TLS, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Observer* were, according to Swinnerton 'unintelligent', 'depressing' and 'dull'²⁸. It is indeed an unmemorable book, which examines the way middle-aged Letitia Boldero copes with a range of problems created by her family and friends. Her husband, Monty, a barrister is afraid he may be on the verge of redundancy, her daughter, Christina, at twenty-one is experiencing difficulties in coping with adulthood, her son, Mark, has a bored wife, who is more interested in her wayward brother-in-law, Julian. Letitia also has to suffer the tyrannical and sadistic personality of her mother, which is mirrored by her brother, Farrington Reynolds, who has married for money, but despises his wife as soon as he discovers it is not forthcoming. Set against Letitia's genteel, professional world, and the grotesque existence of her mother and siblings, is the theatrical milieu of her friends, Gabriel and Constance Wilton, who involve her in their own sadness as Gabriel finds he is dying. The twists of the plot are always interesting but it is difficult to see how Letitia can resolve the problems of the people surrounding her. Yet her serenity will eventually triumph. 'Letitia is a woman of imagination and spiritual balance, and her influence is all the more genuine because it is untouched by arrogance. Her charm masks her capacity.'²⁹

The US critics were more enthusiastic than the British ones. The *New York Times* considered it a good novel full of creative buoyancy and applauded Swinnerton's ability to describe the London of the privileged as well as the London of squalor. In conclusion, Frances Hackett, the author of the review, wrote: 'There is much to be said for a generous, illuminating novel that has emotion and

brains and literary conscience commingled.³⁰ Both of Swinnerton's previous novels *The Fortunate Lady* and *Thankless Child* did not earn their advances in the USA and for this one Swinnerton took a cut and was rewarded by good sales - 14,000 in the first two weeks and 19,000 by the end of May 1945. In the UK sales were exceptional - the 20,000 print run for the first edition was sold out in August 1944 and a reprint of 5,000 was undertaken.

With this success in mind he was able to work on his latest novel in the New Year. But interruptions as usual interfered. He took delivery of six chickens, closely followed by guinea pigs. His agent, Steele, began to receive increasing numbers of enquiries for translation rights and between 1945 and 1950 Swinnerton's books were translated into Swedish, Spanish, Norwegian, Hungarian, Dutch, Czech, Danish, German, Portuguese and Finnish.³¹ The War in Europe ended on 8 May and two days later Olivia was baptised, with his old friends Myrtle and Ernest Yeoman and Ursula Rowley as god-parents. Hamish Hamilton agreed to be a supernumerary fourth, to be particularly responsible for giving Olivia advice, to which role his literary wisdom was especially suited.

It was now 1945 and many interruptions, including talks in July to the International Guild of Hospital Librarians and to Cranleigh School, delayed the completion of his novel until August. Despite another talk, this time at Morley College, the preparation of two BBC scripts and some articles, Swinnerton was able to indulge his idle nature. On 23 December he had to cope with another death, his old Aunt Winifred. The money earned from *A Woman in Sunshine* swelled his income to £2600 in 1945 and with the

war over he was relieved that his financial security was still intact and he would be able to take up again his preferred lifestyle behind the hedges of Old Tokefield.

Chapter 16

YEARS OF PEACEFUL DOMESTIC RETIREMENT

1946 - 1950

A new routine began around the garden, animals and the house, with none of the family having any desire to venture far from the village. Life showed them a cheerful, contented and uneventful face. Yet Swinnerton was kept very busy with household chores and his work. He was sixty-two years old, and he planned to write one novel a year, keep up with his correspondence, especially his regular letters to Norah Hoult, Jamie Hamilton and Martin Secker, and during this period he would also commence regular articles for *John O'London's Weekly*. His sadnesses were the seemingly regular deaths of friends and illnesses in the family.

Early in 1946 he worked through all of Bennett's fiction as he had been asked to write the Arnold Bennett entry for the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He broadcast for the BBC and wrote a preface for Hamilton on Hazlitt. On 3 March his old friend and Reform Club companion, A G Gardiner died, followed closely by Ursula Rowley's husband, Jack.

April was spent holidaying with the family in Grassington revisiting old haunts. He gave a talk in Leeds on the 9th and one in Huddersfield the next day. Once home Swinnerton began his only children's novel, *The Cats and Rosemary*, followed in June by notes on a new novel, *Faithful Company*. His relaxation was predictable: reading, gardening and watching cricket. At the beginning of August a short story was written, 'One Crowded Hour', but this did not interfere with the steady work on his novel, which at the end of the month had reached 10,000 words.

The death of H G Wells on 13 August closed a chapter of his life and all that remained of his years as a young, aspiring writer and member of the literary circle of the 1910s and 1920s were his memories. Wells stood alongside Bennett and Walpole as Swinnerton's best known friend. Bennett had offered to introduce Swinnerton to Wells, but was only instrumental in supplying a letter of introduction when Swinnerton needed reminiscences whilst working on his book of Gissing. Wells was not present when Swinnerton called and Jane Wells was able only to loan him some material which Wells possessed. Although his first sight of Wells had been ten years previously whilst a clerk at Dents, it was at the home of Katherine Mansfield at the end of 1912 that he finally made his acquaintance. Wells had liked the book on Gissing and consequently invited Swinnerton to supper at his Church Road house in Hampstead. On the evening Swinnerton felt so intimidated by Wells's sharpness and talkativeness that the young author was struck dumb until he was coaxed to relax, and soon a friendship blossomed. Swinnerton liked Wells's kindness, friendliness and energy. Wells thought highly of Swinnerton's writings, commenting that he:

sees life and renders it with a steadiness and detachment and patience quite foreign to my disposition. He has no underlying motive. He sees and tells. His aim is the attainment of that beauty which comes with exquisite presentation. Seen through his art, life is seen as one sees things through a crystal lens, more intensely, more completed, and with less turbidity. There the

business begins and ends for him. He does not want you or anyone to do anything.²

He also felt an affection for this man, twenty years his junior, who was not a sycophant, but remained natural in whatever his surroundings, and after 1912 the two men met frequently.

After Swinnerton's near fatal illness in 1914, Wells, like Bennett, showed his affection by constantly inviting him to spend time at Little Easton, the Wellises' Essex home. They took good care of him, were kind, generous and extremely loyal, and Swinnerton became a fixture at their weekend parties, where order was soon discarded in favour of feverish activity: tennis; hockey; quoits; charades; dancing; bridge; demon patience; and a ball game similar to badminton, played in a huge barn complete with pianola. They went to bed early, so they could be rested for the next day's activities. Wells always took an active part in the games and always managed to win. To Wells Swinnerton was 'as gay a companion as he is fragile. He is a twinkling addition to any Christmas party'.³ His weekends there were so memorable that during his 1926 US tour Swinnerton would recall the strenuous activities, from the early cup of tea and scramble to the bathroom, to the last pillow fight at night. He declared that 'a week-end with the Wells [sic] was often so strenuous that it required a week afterwards to recover from it'.⁴

Over the years Swinnerton grew very attached to Jane Wells. For him she blossomed and he found her light-hearted, funny and witty. She was an excellent housekeeper, running her London flat and Little Easton with competence and kindness, and her servants

were loyal to her. She cared for her guests' comforts and found time to act as her husband's secretary. Yet in public she gave no sign of her true character and was subsequently labelled frigid, reserved and uninteresting, which annoyed Swinnerton to the extent that he would defend her, especially in print, where he was able to portray her as she really was, warmhearted and affectionate. It was she who invited him, as a reliable friend, to help her entertain her guests. Swinnerton wrote regularly to both of them, but mostly about domestic matters and personal worries. In London Wells and Swinnerton met regularly at the Reform Club. David Smith, in his biography of Wells⁵ comments that Jane would often read and correct Swinnerton's proofs and it was she who 'apparently tipped off H. G. as to the strength of *Nocturne* when it appeared at Easton in proof before publication'.⁶

After the First World War, when Swinnerton had been ill again, Wells visited him in his nursing home and on discovering that he had nowhere to go to convalesce insisted that he came to Easton for two weeks. In 1920 Swinnerton agreed to act as Wells's executor in the event that he should die before Jane. When Wells was involved with his liaisons Swinnerton was one of the men who offered Jane the moral support she needed, although their relationship always remained platonic. Swinnerton brought Mary to meet Jane at a private lunch and Smith hints that the Wellses helped Swinnerton to find his country home and gave him some financial assistance with its purchase, but there is no evidence to substantiate this claim.

Unfortunately the relationship cooled when Jane, ever loyal to her wayward husband, challenged Swinnerton over a comment he was

supposed to have made about Wells whilst giving lectures in the USA in 1926. Swinnerton protested he had been misquoted and abjectly apologised. According to Smith it was Jane who had been Swinnerton's friend, so it does not seem surprising that after the estrangement there was little contact between the Wellses and the Swinnertons until after Jane's death in 1927. In 1929 whilst in the South of France the Swinnertons visited Wells and Odette Keun and back in England they began to lunch at the Reform Club, visit the theatre together, and correspond again. Both were complimentary about each other's work and Swinnerton always wrote in praise of Wells in his various critical works, as he had done with Bennett.

By the late 1930s Swinnerton was one of Wells's most important friends, along with Olaf Stapledon and J B Priestley. Yet their letters rarely commented now on each other's books, possibly because their styles had become so different that they felt unable to discuss them honestly. Yet when in 1939 Wells made a favourable comment about *The Two Wives* Swinnerton replied 'But first of all believe how much your letter means to me, and how much you have always meant to me. Real affection and unalterable gratitude'.⁷ In his way Swinnerton was showing the depth of his affection for Wells. He was one of few men who had never crossed swords with Wells and their friendship lasted thirty-three years.

Swinnerton took Mary and Olivia to Eastbourne on 25 August and left them with a family friend for a week before he moved them to Bognor Regis. His letters to them describe his peaceful, routine existence: feeding the hens, taking care of the guinea pigs, his activities in the garden, and a description of a storm, which blew

down three to four hundred apples. To Olivia he told anecdotes of the guinea pigs and cats, written in the language he would use in his children's book. It seemed that Mary had gone for a holiday by the sea in an attempt to cure sickness and a troublesome cough. But the weather had proved stormy and cold and perhaps the person who had benefitted most from the separation was Swinnerton, who, at his desk by ten o'clock in the morning, had planned to write 20,000 words of *Faithful Company* before their return.

With the family's reunion on the 14 September, work took a back seat. Swinnerton made regular trips to London as he was a member of the Reform Club Library Committee and he also visited his friend Jimmy Horsnell, who was gravely ill. The only work which came from his pen was an interesting little article which appeared in *The Literary Digest*, called 'Books to Buy' which described the difference between people who collect books for their rarity value and those who are attracted by their content, the group to which Swinnerton belonged. He makes a strong case for allowing old and modern works to stand together, as he believed neither could stand alone, but could only be understood fully when compared and contrasted with each other.

The year drew to a close as Swinnerton played a full part in family life. There was a brief weekend visit to Ashford to see Bokes and to Canterbury to visit Mary's aunt at the beginning of November; regular Olivia-minding periods when Mary was out; and he acted as chauffeur as Olivia increased her circle of friends. On 18 December he gave the Presidential address to the Bookman's Circle at the Cowdray Club in Cavendish Square, 'The Literary Life'. But none of this affected his literary output.

The end of the year saw the publication of *English Maiden* which A A Milne considered 'terrific. I don't think I have ever enjoyed a book so much'. He had picked it up by chance and was soon so engrossed that he 'woke up three nights later saying "where am I?" Sally is adorable.'* The Sally, whom Milne had found so attractive, was Swinnerton's heroine, Sally Carter, whose life we follow from her birth in a happy household in a late Victorian English village, to her rise in domestic service on the estate of Josiah Whelpdale, where she eventually marries the son of the house, Victor, after her own childhood love, Tom is seduced by her old friend, Jane and has to marry her. When Josiah dies he leaves only debts, which Victor is forced to honour, in one case by supporting a disastrous theatrical venture. He is experiencing financial difficulties of his own with his publishing company and all these worries culminate in a breakdown, leaving Sally to take up the reins of the business, where she rallies the staff and succeeds in reversing the fortunes. Time passes and their daughter, Judith, voices a wish to go on the stage, but Victor reacts badly to the suggestion as it reminds him of his own unhappy experiences. However, as the book closes Victor witnesses his daughter's success in the theatre and in old age he and Sally have managed to lay their ghosts and are at peace.

Despite the slow beginning, the novel soon gathers pace and although, typically, Swinnerton appears to rush the climax, as if bored with the work, the storyline is compulsive. His handling of Sally is superb and he does not put a foot wrong as we see her grow from strength to strength. Although one can imagine her obtaining the support of her colleagues when forced to take over

Victor's business, it is harder to believe the readiness with which she is accepted into the Whelpdale household. It is a panoramic novel, spanning seventy years of English life and contains a mixture of 'country' and 'town' scenes, not a common practice in Swinnerton's novels. He also makes good use of his knowledge of the theatre and publishing to form the basis of his novel, as well as his acute perception of working class village folk. Norah Hoult enjoyed the work, but felt that Jane and Sally's friend Nelly were the most living characters and she would have preferred to have read more about their rivalries.⁹

Rouse makes a telling observation. 'At first glance one might say that this story is hackneyed - the little servant girl marries the master's son and so on. Perhaps it is a measure of Swinnerton's art that he dared to use a seemingly threadbare "story" and miraculously succeeded in creating a delightful comedy, full of life and beauty.'¹⁰ He adds that it 'is a distinguished and rewarding novel for its beauty of scene; for its quality of living reality, of life lived; for its lively characterisation; for its possession of tones that seem always fitting, always natural; and for Sally Carter and her happiness. These are merits not to be overlooked.'¹¹

The novel was issued by Hutchinson under the Universal Book Club imprint and Swinnerton was paid a £400 advance. By 30 September almost all of the 30,000 print run had been sold and a reprint of 10,000 was undertaken in October. By April 1947 25% of it had been sold. Doubleday, on the other hand had feared that its publication in the USA would damage Swinnerton's reputation, which had been greatly boosted by *A Woman in Sunshine* and had

recommended postponement to which Swinnerton agreed. This well-crafted, readable work helped swell the Swinnerton coffers and his earnings of £3800 set him up to face another year, which would be as peaceful, leisuredly and domestic as the previous one.

He began 1947 with a talk to the Ewhurst WI, 'The Literary Life', and then his friends Ethel and Bokes, and Viola Garvin's husband, Jack, died. Continuous work on his two novels, adult and junior, was disrupted by heavy snow, electricity cuts and family illnesses in the Winter, and his presence on the Royal Literary Fund and Reform Club Library committees. On top of that Brincklow's illness required Swinnerton's attention in the garden in the Spring. In May he attended a reception for Thomas Mann at the Savoy and on 27 May he finished *The Cats and Rosemary*. In July his old friend Nell DeBoer died and he was informed that, together with Horsnell, he was a legatee. With typical generosity he requested that his bequest should go to Mrs Saunders, Mrs DeBoer's housekeeper, who had been forced to pay death duties on an annuity purchased for her by her employer. She was not well off and Swinnerton sought to pay her death duties as well. However, on 24 May 1949 Swinnerton did receive £300 worth of stock of Schweppes Ltd. and when pressed in 1950 he accepted some savings bonds.

After a one week family holiday in Brighton in August, he completed *Faithful Company* on 6 September. At the end of the month Olivia underwent an operation in hospital, and he visited both her and Horsnell in London. His days were filled with family pleasures: trips to the Oval; Brighton, Guildford and Bognor Regis; and several visits to the cinema. He took Olivia to school, read for pleasure and had the nursery and dining room decorated.

Just before Christmas he turned his attention to work again and began to collect material for a *Tokefield Miscellany*. Despite the quiet year, he maintained his income, having received approximately £2650.

1948 was uneventful. His most frequent personal letters were written to Ursula Rowley, Jimmy Horsnell, Jamie Hamilton, Jo Davidson, Siegfried Sassoon, Viola Garvin, Vivian Phillipps, Winston Graham and Richard Church. In February he worked on a preface for Northcote's *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds* as well as doing some background reading on the history of English and French novels. 8 March saw a BBC broadcast 'A Farewell to Reviewing' and more novel reading: *Don Quixote*, *Swann's Way* and *Ulysses*, which was preparation for an article on 'The Novel' for the *New Universal Encyclopaedia*. Also in March he wrote an article for *The Publishers Weekly*, 'A Word from London'. Spring called his attention to the garden and he was soon preparing beds, planting flowers, digging, mowing and setting up the tennis court. On 14 April Swinnerton talked about Arnold Bennett at Morley College, whilst on the 21st 'Literary Friendships' was his subject to the Bookman Circle.

On 1 May he began his new novel *The Doctor's Wife Comes to Stay*, but was soon side-tracked by the request for a preface to Henry James's *The Ambassadors* and five BBC talks, recorded in June. He found excuses to clip the hedges and visit Horsnell in London. The latter was clearly dying and on 18 August Swinnerton helped him deal with his estate, despite the fact that he came away from the sick bed depressed. In July he accepted the vice-Presidency of the Anglo-American Council and also gave three talks

on the radio about G K Chesterton, a holiday with Arnold Bennett, and J M Barrie and *The Young Visitors*.¹²

His major distraction though, was his first holiday abroad for ten years. On 21 August he began his usual journey through European towns on his way to Lucerne, to visit the glaciers and mountains, to Interlaken, Montreux, where Olivia enjoyed the bear pits, to Lausanne by steamer and back by rail, to Vevey, shopping. On 1 September they returned via Paris, where they were met by Jo and Florence Davidson.

Before Swinnerton finally returned to his new novel, he began to put together extra material for a new edition of *Tokefield Papers* and gave a talk at Wandsworth Public Library on 6 October on the subject of 'How Books are Written, reviewed, sold and read'. He took up his novel again, wrote a synopsis, but then turned his attention once more to a new introduction to *Tokefield Papers*. Satisfied with the revisions, he sent the new version to Hamilton on 25 October. During November he read background materials for scripts he had been commissioned to write about Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, D H Lawrence, Saintsbury, and Henry James, which he recorded for the BBC on 20 December. In November he also had one of his periodic skirmishes with Hutchinsons. Fed up with their failure to reprint many of his works, he asked to terminate his contract with them for *The Georgian Literary Scene* as another publisher had offered to republish it. However, he was fond of his contact, Mrs Webb, and a meeting soon resolved matters and Hutchinson reissued *The Georgian Literary Scene* in 1949, along with other reprints. In December he tried again to restart *The Doctor's Wife Comes to Stay*. For the third time he rewrote the

beginning and made enough progress to have completed the first chapter, 5387 words, by the end of the year.

Meanwhile *Faithful Company* was launched and helped his income reach £2890 that year. His author's copies were sent to the usual people: Mrs P P Howe, Secker, Norah Houlst, Phil, Ally Willmott (his old typist and friend), Ursula, Jimmy Horsnell, Viola Garvin, Sassoon, Mrs A G Gardiner amongst others. On this occasion Swinnerton has returned to his early days for a theme. He has set his double story in an old London publishing house with the action taking place between the Wars. On the one side, Barry Fowler, the bright, steady hero, edits one of the company's quasi-religious periodicals, *The Christian Wife*. His marriage to flighty, impulsive Hester is clearly not destined to succeed. She is discontented, has social pretensions, snobbish, hypocritical friends and is easily distracted by Barry's old friend Hal Byfleet, who appears to be able to offer her a higher standard of living and more excitement than Barry can. Meanwhile, Laura Kingbody, a pretty typist, works with Barry and shares her home with her recently widowed father, Augustus, and repressed sister, who keeps house. Both Barry and Laura, who are destined to fall in love, are popular and they need to marshal all their resources to prevent the owner, 'young' George Goodleby, from destroying the firm. The latter provides the second storyline. Old Tom Goodleby dies, leaving his dislikeable middle-aged son as apparent heir to the company. Unbeknown to George, Tom had secretly married the amiable Mrs Hayling and has in fact left the business to her. George is gloriously portrayed as a mean-minded, vindictive, petty, nasty individual. He sacks Barry, chases after Laura and is

slowly taken over by madness to the extent that, when he discovers that Old Tom has cheated him in his will, he sets fire to the building and perishes in the flames. Hester has left Barry for Henry Byfleet and so Laura can finally claim her man.

One feels that Swinnerton has brought Dent's back to life, and one can speculate that the Goodlebys have elements of old Dent in their make-up. Although the characterisations, especially that of the evil George, have a depth of perception and a completeness unusual in Swinnerton's works, they are on the whole never entirely satisfactory. One is left with the feeling that Barry should have acted more forcibly, that he would never have married someone like Hester in the first place. Although beautifully drawn, the scenes with George lack readability, slow the pace of the book and retard the development of the Hester-Barry-Laura plot. Rouse considered it:

a curious and uneven book. ... This novel has its chief merits in its character portrayals and in the creation of a sense of life. Clearly, the most striking characterizations are those of Old Tom Goodleby and his son, perfect representations of hypocrisy incarnate. This precious pair take their places among the most revolting in all fiction. Being with them during one of their sessions together is enough to invite nausea.¹²

Commenting on the significance of its subtitle *A Winter's Tale*, he enlarges:

For this is indeed a winter's tale, full of ugliness and beauty, malevolence and kindness. Throughout the publishing house episodes Swinnerton's weapon of delightful malice is in full play, and it is equally evident in the other parts of the book, especially in his depiction of Hester and her friends. Swinnerton's malice is fully justified in this full-scale attack on tyranny and hypocrisy, and on pretentiousness and false culture.'⁴

Norah Hoult had enjoyed the book and considered it the best he had written for some years. However, she felt he had 'telescoped extravagantly', and believed that with so much material a further two books could have been extracted from the one, that is the early life of the Goodlebys as well as a closer look at Barry and Laura.'⁵ Swinnerton agreed 'that the end was hustled; but the blasted work was already very long, and very much overdue, and I justified the hustle on the ground that a reader doesn't want, once he's got the hang of a book, to be kept dilly-dallying while the author makes every letter perfect.'⁶

Like Professor Rouse, the *New York Times*'⁷ takes up the 'Winter's Tale' angle and expands the title page quotation, taken from Gorky, which suggests that 'scoundrels too are unhappy'. The review emphasises the character of George and praises Swinnerton for his ability to show this 'scoundrel', not only as a contemptuous creature, but also with compassion. The reviewer, Follett, speaks of Swinnerton's 'unfailing gusto', lack of dullness and compares him favourably to Dickens, Victor Hugo, Priestly and Trollope.

The beginning of 1949 brought more deaths with Nelson Doubleday in January and, after a long illness, Jimmy Horsnell passed away on 10 February. Swinnerton agreed to *The Observer's* request to write his obituary. He attended the cremation in Golders Green on the 16th and returned afterwards to Horsnell's flat with Hamilton, Tomlinson and Sammy Edgar to drink sherry and reminisce. He wrote to Norah Hoult that the death had been a relief to him, because Horsnell's mind had gone and he no longer recognised Swinnerton when he visited him in Muswell Hill. 'He was the last old friend I had who knew all that I know and a bit more.' His family more than ever became the focus for his life. Despite Mary's illness at the beginning of the year, which put more chores in his way, he worked on his novel and completed *The Doctor's Wife Comes to Stay* on 29 April. He attended a Foyle's luncheon on 24 May and gave a BBC broadcast on the 29th on 'Living and Reading'. An invitation to the Royal Garden Party for 7 July was accepted. Mary's birthday was celebrated on the 19th and Olivia's twelfth on the 26th.

His contentment did not extend to his publishers. In May Swinnerton had been annoyed by Hutchinson's proposal to remainder 640 copies of *Elizabeth* and he threatened to invoke his 'out-of-print' clause and cease dealing with them if it happened. Putting this aggravation aside, he wrote one of his increasingly rare short stories, 'Beauty and the Beast' and took his family off to France on the 16th. The Golden Arrow took them to Paris, where they stayed in the Avenue Bertie-Albrecht, and from where he phoned Jo Davidson. A few days were spent showing Olivia the Eiffel Tower, the Jardin des Plantes and Notre-Dame and then they

took a train to Tours, where Davidson met them. For five days they shared the Davidson's home, and Davidson proposed that he and Swinnerton should produce a book showing all the British and American authors whom Davidson had sculpted, with Swinnerton's contribution being verbal portraits of each. However, the project foundered at the point, when Davidson sent prints to Swinnerton.

Home again Swinnerton was pleased to learn that the French firm, Hachette, had published *The Georgian House* as *La Vieille Maison*. In September a new edition of *Tokefield Papers* was published. Five and a half months after finishing his previous novel, he began a new one on 10 October, but as had become his practice, it lay untouched for two months until he recommenced it on 3 December. October proved a fruitful month. He was approached by Wilson Midgley of *John O'London's Weekly* to take over from the recently deceased Robert Lynd. On the 25th he went to Lynd's memorial service and agreed to be taken on the staff. To begin with he would write a fortnightly column, but this soon became a weekly one, for which he was paid ten guineas per article. The journal had first appeared on 12 April 1919 under the editorship of Wilfred Whitten, who was later joined by Sydney Dark. In 1924 George Blake took over and by 1928 Frank Whitaker had been appointed associate editor. It contained forty pages and appeared every Saturday, and as well as the regular *Letters to Gog and Magog* column, which Swinnerton was to take on, it also offered criticism, comments on educational matters, book lists, stories, anecdotes, biographies, and gossip about books, authors and actors. In 1952, twenty-six of Swinnerton's letters from the periodical were published under the title *Londoner's Post: Letters*

to *Gog and Magog*. November found Swinnerton working on a new edition of *The Georgian Literary Scene*, talking to the Royal Academy of Music on 'Reading and Life' and on the 10 November he autographed books at the Sunday Times National Book Exhibition. This was also the day on which *The Doctor's Wife Comes to Stay* was released.

This is a rather sad story of wasted lives set in the present day of post-war London. We see the uncovering of human frailties through Rex Tweed's eyes. He is an aspiring painter, who has won a commission to paint the elderly Augusta Earle. At the same time, his beautiful wife, Elizabeth has accepted an acting part, which will take her to the USA, leaving Rex alone. Her mother, Rose Anderson comes to stay to look after Rex, but she falls ill and dies without wishing to see her husband. We see the characters slowly develop, their strengths and faults. There are no stereotypes. Just when one feels comfortable with one of the protagonists a new element alters the perceptions. Rex is used as a tool to uncover these people's past. It transpires that Augusta Earle knew Rose from their youth, her husband being Rose's jilted fiancé, who she believed still loved her rival. Rose had preferred the dour Scottish physician and was forced to live with her mistake.

With the backdrop of theatre and comfortable London surroundings, Swinnerton uses a slow pace, eschews action, to delve into the fears and beliefs of his characters. It is the sort of novel which he does best, but somehow here it does not work. It is not a gripping story, nor easy to read. The element of a mystery in the past is the only aspect which helps the flow of the

narrative. Too much dialogue does not contribute to the development of the characters. There is little humour, irony being Swinnerton's chief weapon, but it makes the style pompous. One point Rouse raises concerning the personalities of the two older women, is worth highlighting.

In a sense, Rose Anderson and Augusta Earle, in character, are two sides of the same coin: beneath her outward gentleness Rose carries hardness that has enabled her to survive forty years of a marriage fraught with hardship and disappointment, while underneath Augusta's harsh exterior is a soft, sentimental, disappointed woman, who has poisoned her life with suspicion.¹⁹

Rouse considered this novel to be one of Swinnerton's best 'as a craftsman, in his inventiveness, and in his use of his inspiration to create human beings fully engaged in action'.²⁰

Two articles published in 1949 show two sides of Swinnerton's book knowledge. 'Liberty and the Printed Word' appeared in *Enquiry*²¹ and showed his opinion of censorship in response to a lobby in the UK, which included Michael Joseph, which sought to supervise the creation of good reading habits. After showing the logical conclusion to this plan by describing book suppression in the USSR and Czechoslovakia, he turns his attention to his own theories regarding the release of poor books. These he believes are the result of too much publishing: over 14,000 have been released since the War. He doubts that anyone would be able to find an acceptable way of controlling quality of output. To Swinnerton the ultimate importance of literature is freedom of

speech, whatever the cost. In the same month *The Listener* published an illuminating article²² in which Swinnerton shows his love for books, his lack of a systematic approach to reading and his need to pursue knowledge for its own sake rather than read to 'escape'. He works through his early reading, from his sickness with diphtheria as a child, when Kingsley's *Water Babies* and Alcott's *Little Women* held him spellbound. He was an adult before he could appreciate Jane Austen, whom he now rereads every year. At fifteen he discovered *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, which sowed the seed for his enormous respect for Conrad in later life. His period at Dent's found him reading Belloc, Shaw, Chesterton, Wells and Hazlitt and as he grew older his tastes led him back through the centuries. There is no doubt that Swinnerton was an exceedingly well read man.

With three books²³ published Swinnerton's income rose to £3500 in 1949 and with 1950 he would receive a regular payment from *John O'London's Weekly* to take some of the pressure off his novel writing. At the start of 1950 he had written almost 5000 words of *Laurels for Catherine*, which would soon become *A Flower for Catherine*. He prepared a bibliography of Arnold Bennett for the British Council and a preface of 1500 words to Bennett's *Pretty Lady* for Secker. He read extensively for his Gog and Magog articles. His time was completely taken up. Somehow he fitted in all his commitments and still found opportunities to introduce Olivia to Gilbert and Sullivan²⁴ and ballet at Covent Garden.²⁵ He seemed dissatisfied with his novel, making numerous cuts and rewrites, but it was completed on 7 June. He wrote a 1400 word article on Rose Macaulay for *The Spectator*, gave a talk at the

Society of Bookman on 8 June, 'A Critic looks at Modern Publishing', and wrote a few miscellaneous reviews. His visits to London were fewer as his life increasingly revolved round his family, who had had a medically eventful year. In January they had suffered from food poisoning and later Olivia caught measles and Mary fell downstairs and broke her wrist. This required an operation and a plaster cast and she and Olivia went to Eastbourne to rest. He published two books during the year and had started negotiations to write a biography of Queen Mary. He corresponded with Lady Cynthia Colville, who believed she would be able to persuade the Queen to change her mind about having a book written about her in her lifetime. She seemed on the verge on consenting, but then refused to allow papers to be made available and nothing more came of the project.

The Cats and Rosemary was published in the UK in the Summer. It had been conceived in 1946 as a series of complete short stories for children. Eight were written and the book had been published in the USA by Alfred A Knopf in 1948, illustrated by Zhenya Gay and dedicated to Olivia. The setting is autobiographical - Old Tokefield is recognisable, as are the four cats Buchie, Bogey, Snowkin and Brownie. None of the names has been changed. There are guinea pigs and chickens and all these animals can talk to Rosemary, who usually comes to their rescue when they have landed themselves in predicaments, from which they cannot extract themselves. The book is simplistic and sentimental, although Blair Rouse would not agree. 'There is no condescension here, for there is nothing quaint or cute about the stories or their subjects. Instead, the delight to be found in them, and

which a child would also find, derives from the warm good humour, the wit, the kindness, and the character perception evident throughout'.²⁶ Its undeniable merit is the insight it gives into the Swinnerton household of Olivia's youth, the strong, close family atmosphere, which radiates from the pages.

A Flower for Catherine was the second work published in 1950, on 3 November. It had mixed reviews. 'Some are shocked; some say "a masterpiece"', declared Swinnerton to Jamie Hamilton in a letter on 26 December. In five months it sold only 1,794 copies and by August 1952 its day had passed and the price was reduced. It is a very unsatisfactory novel with few characters, just Catherine Barter's family. In middle age Catherine, with an unsatisfactory husband, Bob, and a grown-up son, takes in Rosie, the daughter of her dead younger sister, Celia, whose life has been shrouded in secrecy. The London background is incidental to this tale of discovery, as slowly Catherine comes to realise that Bob has betrayed her and is the father of the ten-year-old child. The book turns inward and the thoughts and feelings of Bob, Catherine and Rosie are explored as they try and resolve the unexpected crisis, which has arisen. Despite the fact that Catherine is the innocent victim of the situation, only she can bring a successful conclusion and the close analysis of the progress of her inner development is superbly handled by Swinnerton. However, the only conclusion can be an acceptance on Catherine's part of the circumstances and this is how the story ends, in a status quo, with Catherine's anger, hatred and disgust spent, and Rosie a permanent member of the household. It is a very realistic ending, but reflects the uneasy, depressing atmosphere,

which pervades the whole book. The psychological insights are up to Swinnerton's usual high standard, but there is no avoiding the feelings of foreboding and gloom. Catherine's strength of character and will are well written, but perhaps the novel's lack of success could be its uncompromising storyline, calling for pity, contempt, uneasiness and suspicion on behalf of a readership looking for escapism in austere post-war England. Even Norah Hoult, normally so positive about his work, comments that for once he appears to condone adultery. 'In this book morality is much more confused with personal loyalties'.²⁷

Swinnerton's income was almost £3000 for 1950. Now he turned his attention to his first non-fiction work since his autobiography in 1937. For this review of the London literary scene, past and present, he read extensively from works on Shakespeare's London and Boswell's *London Journal* before making his own contribution to the subject.

Chapter 17

YEARS OF PEACEFUL DOMESTIC RETIREMENT

1951 - 1960

Little disturbed the peace of the Swinnertons' domestic existence over the next ten years. Swinnerton was now sixty-six years old and by the end of this period he could still be found following his established practice of attempting to write for six hours each day, even though many other people would have begun to slow down their commitments in his position. It is true that his novels were taking much longer to write, up to a year in some cases, and it was also true that Swinnerton now rarely took up speaking engagements and his visits to London were less frequent, usually in response to pre-arranged lunch dates or theatre visits. He spent less time in the garden, concentrating mostly on his annual round of clipping his numerous hedges. By the end of the fifties the tennis court seemed no longer to be in use, the chicken house had been dismantled, no more mention was made of guinea pigs. Although he still received letters daily, they arrived in smaller quantities. He still sat on the Royal Literary Fund Committee, attended the Foyle's Literary Luncheons on a regular basis, but gave up the Reform Club Library Committee. His main recreational activity, apart from reading, was cricket, and when not watching the local team playing on the green, he could be found in Hove with his family watching Sussex play. He visited his friends: Jamie and Yvonne Hamilton, Philip Gibbs, Norah Hoult, Winston Graham, sometimes in their homes, or most often over a meal in London. But the passage of time decreased his intimate circle, as each year brought news of new deaths. His brother's family would

regularly descend on Old Tokefield and the house was often full with Olivia's friends. Both Swinnerton and Mary had medical problems each year, often colds and in Swinnerton's case, headaches and neuralgia, which would interfere with his work from time to time. But it was a life full of peace and routine, which appealed to him and he endeavoured to surround himself with an atmosphere, which was as uneventful as he could make it. However, as his major income depended on his literary output, the one area he could not afford to ignore was his writing.

In 1951, apart from the regular *John O'London* articles, for which he always did an impressive amount of research, he completed *The Bookman's London*, which was published that year by Allan Wingate and reissued in 1969 by John Baker, who, in his introduction wrote 'They will find in its urbanity and twinkling wit, its sense of the past, that "being in books" is something of a vocation, and the whiff of printing ink or newly-made paper ... is an intoxicant that produces the unique combination that makes a great bookseller or publisher'.¹ Describing its contents, Swinnerton wrote 'It is London's connection with the printed page, and those who deal in the printed page and in its contents, that is the subject of this book'.² With this in mind, he divides the work into six sections and recounts the development of the London book trade from its beginnings to the present day. Once he has set the scene by describing the centre of publishing in Paternoster Row in the time of Dickens, he examines in a panoramic look over the centuries the different people and places who make up the book world. The chapter on London authors spans the years from John Donne to H G Wells. That on publishers from the great houses

of Fisher Unwin, Dent, Lane and Chatto to the new era of Methuen, Heinemann, Macmillan and Secker, and finishes with the 'youngsters' as represented by Cape, Gollancz and Bloomsbury. The treatment of booksellers is similar. To complete his overview, Swinnerton touches on Literary Homes, from Milton to James, Gissing and Bennett and finally throws in an examination of writers' haunts: The British Museum, The London Library, coffee houses, restaurants and clubs.

This type of book shows Swinnerton at his best. It is full of little details and observations, either gleaned from comprehensive research or from memory. It is immensely readable, interesting and informative, written in an intimate style, which gives the reader the impression that Swinnerton is reminiscing especially for him. Garfield Howe was impressed by just this aspect. 'I do so admire the ease with which you walk through bygone days with your observant eye for character and your gift for apt quotation: you seem to know where to put your hand on anything you want so that all your voluminous reading is turned to account'.³ The proof reader, Samuel Ratcliffe called it delightful and felt sure it would be a success.⁴ There were many reviews on both sides of the Atlantic and the general tone was that Swinnerton had written a quiet, discursive book, which would give the bibliophile much pleasure, which showed Swinnerton's shrewd and accurate memory, his uncommon ability to make the reader absorb unconsciously the materials presented, and which did justice to this popular and respected institution, which Swinnerton had clearly become in the Book World. One reviewer⁵ remarks that 'Frank Swinnerton is one of those distinguished, conscientious bookmen who is likely to

accumulate years and honors but never exactly sets the world on fire', an astute, if cutting remark, but one at which Swinnerton would have probably have not taken offence. In his modesty, he would most likely have taken issue with the word 'distinguished'.

The Bookman's London appeared towards the end of 1951, and Swinnerton had already begun to write his next novel *Master Jim Probity*. He had also written various articles, his regular 'Word from London' for *The Publishers Weekly*, a very short piece⁶ in which he decries the increased use of clichés. An article for *Drama* was an obituary for his friend Geoffrey Whitworth, who had died in September. He lingers on the days when the two men had had a free hand to select Chatto and Windus's books together. He writes of his enormous respect for this patient, good tempered, intelligent man, who had now passed away and left only fond memories.⁷

Articles about Swinnerton were now beginning to appear again with increasing regularity. Many had appeared in the 1910s and 1920s, when Swinnerton had been at the beginning of his career. Now that each birthday was beginning to be a milestone, a more concentrated interest was again being shown. The difference in these later articles, is that they are able to look objectively at what Swinnerton has achieved. They all go over the old, familiar ground of Swinnerton's youth, his years amidst bookmen and his success as a writer. But then each journalist comments, according to his own leanings and preferences, on Swinnerton's place in the literary world. In an article in 1951 Wilson Midgley considers him a man who smiles always 'on a world which has brought him fame in almost every activity in which a literary man can indulge - as

novelist, critic, reviewer, journalist, essayist, literary historian and broadcaster. ... In club and offices he is known as one of the most delightful and entertaining talkers, with a mind stored with rich reminiscences and a gift for mimicry which would have made his fortune on the stage'.⁸ He goes on to recount two anecdotes, which are worth repeating here, because they capture the man so completely. Midgley first describes the dinner, on which occasion he was to ask Swinnerton to write the 'Gog and Magog' column for *John O'London's Weekly*. He was unable to break into Swinnerton's flow of chatter until the latter was leaving. On hearing the request to join Midgley's staff, Swinnerton agreed instantly, accepted the fee with a wave and was gone. The second example, recounted to Midgley by Swinnerton himself, illustrates his modesty and the ease with which fame sat on his shoulders. Walking with Olivia in the village soon after the Second World War was over, two old inhabitants touched their hats when greeting him. When the innocent Olivia asked him why they did that, she added 'It isn't as if you were anybody special'.

A delightful, naive article, which says as much about the Australian writer as it does about Swinnerton declares:

Frank Swinnerton is not a great writer. He is often a little dull. He overdraws his characters at times, so that the imagination is left idle and the brain numbed by words. He is a typical Englishman. He thinks it bad taste to get excited about anything and distrusts excesses of any sort. His characters are invariably modest and moderate. Their love affairs are sincere, but never exceed the bounds of good taste.⁹

1952 began with the death of Jo Davidson. Swinnerton then visited Plymouth to lecture, with St John Ervine, L A G Strong and Henry Williamson present and attended the Buckingham Palace Garden Party on the 17th July. He wrote a rare short story in August, 'The Manuscript in the Safe', which was published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in October 1953 under the heading of *Romantic Realism*. This prize-winning story exposes a murderer who has cleverly covered his tracks, but has made a crucial miscalculation. It is one of Swinnerton's better stories, well written, pleasing and shows the deftness of his narrative where facts are revealed a little at a time, thus keeping the reader guessing.

Two Swinnerton books went to press in 1952. The one which took the least work, was an edited version of the letters he had written as 'Gog and Magog' for *John O'London's Weekly*. The letters were written at the same time as Swinnerton was working on *The Bookman's London* and much material is duplicated. However the style of the letters shows a more popular journalistic hand, with no assumption being made of the reader's familiarity with the book world. This collection shows his versatility. Each letter deals with a separate literary subject, often a slight glimpse at an anecdote, a novel, a writer, a situation, which is expanded by Swinnerton in such an interesting, well-written way, and shows him at his best. It is easy to forget that this literate man, with such a good command of the English language, never completed a formal education, missed years at school through illness and was working at the age of fifteen. His extensive knowledge is constantly revealed, he is not afraid to express his opinions, but

in such a candid way that no offence can be taken. Swinnerton's first ambition had been to be a journalist. Seeing his work here, it is possible to believe that his first instinct was correct and that in a way he missed his true vocation.

Some of the letters reveal aspects of himself. In 'Finishing a Book' he shows his attitude to novel writing, his laziness, his belief that his own works are psychological dramas and shows how his ideas arise. 'Every so often I find myself thinking about a group of imaginary characters, and being amused by them; and I begin to plan a story about them. ... I see a book in scenes; I hear the voices of real people; I aim at, but never attain, tragic conflict of character. And I set out on this labour, not with hope, but with deep and abiding interest'.¹⁰ To him the beginning is easy, it is the length which kills the tale. His characters are always imaginary and what gives interest to the story for him is 'their relation and inter-relation'.¹¹

In 'Writers and Slippers' Swinnerton examines the history and nature of the familiar essay, which is especially interesting as it is a technique Swinnerton is using at that very moment, conveying the feeling that the author is sitting by the fire-side chatting amiably to his reader as if he were present and not reading a book at an isolated distance. Some articles take a fresh look at writers less known to modern audiences than they once were, and he sheds new light on Henry Seton Merriman, Fenimore Cooper and George Saintsbury among others. This work, more than ever, leaves behind the impression that Swinnerton should be remembered for his causeries and non-fiction, rather than his well-crafted but sometimes uninspired novels.

Swinerton continued to write for *John O'London's Weekly* until its demise in September 1954 after its quality and circulation had rapidly declined. The press mourned the disappearance of this institution, which had built up its reputation over thirty five years. In an obituary J C Trewin wrote of it 'It had a civilised intimacy. It talked, without affectation, about books, drama, music, art. It was never laboriously cynical. It was candid but it was never cruel. It did not encourage the exhibitionist'.¹² The publishers, George Newnes, had quoted economic reasons for its closure and had refused offers for it as it was their policy not to sell their papers. Swinerton had just completed his 200th letter.

Master Jim Probity was published on 2 October 1952 in the UK and in 1953 in the USA under the title *An Affair of Love*. It is a straightforward tale of Jim's life after the death of his father at their country home, Horsells, when Jim is ten years old. He spends an unhappy youth with his Aunt in London and at fifteen he begins work as an office boy at *The Courier*, where he rises to the subeditorship. He has an affair with the editor's wife, Lady Tender, who gives him an allowance, which allows him to return to Horsells. But when he rejects Lady Tender and marries his old friend Olga, his allowance stops and he loses his job to his rival Fenmore. This aggravates a heart complaint and we last see him an invalid watching his son talking with the gardener, as he had once done (at the beginning of the book) when his father had died. The storyline and characters are straightforward. The theme of the book is an examination of Jim's character. Rouse says 'contemplation of hypocrisy can only be unpleasant, however

interesting. And young James Price Probity most assuredly is a hypocrite. He is conscious of wanting to be good, and to him the wish seems to serve as the act.''' His life is lived through his own belief in his goodness. In fact, his selfish nature causes his downfall, a fact he comes to realise only at the end of the book. Olga saves him from himself. She understands exactly what he is but loves him nonetheless.

The description of London life reflects Swinnerton's own experiences: a poor upbringing, the move to a flat of his own, the weekend parties in country houses among the wealthy, the initial shyness and the final acceptance by those around him. There is an excellent description of the country mobilising for war, perhaps an insight into how Swinnerton himself saw and felt these preparations. As has been noted of his previous panoramic novels, the very scope of the work takes away the reader's emotional involvement with the characters as urgency is lost. It is an interesting book, but not really satisfying, as the various innuendos are not resolved: is Olga seeing Fenmore; has Lady Tender told Olga of his liaison with her? We see these aspects only through Jim's eyes and are never allowed to know the truth. Richard Church was complimentary:

I read Master Jim Probity and again enjoyed your work. This is vintage: your Copperfield. Though I wish he could have ended up more independently without becoming an invalid. The book is full of your natural, circumstantial wisdom; so quick in apprehension as always to be a conditioner of your prose style, which is a sort of literary equivalent of pointillisme; lots of highlights &

colours accumulating to a Seurat-like composition of quiet beauty, whose over-all effect is one of spiritual serenity.¹⁴

Despite the fact that some of the reviews and some of his friends considered it a satisfying and subtle book, *Master Jim Probity* did not sell well and did not reach its expected sales. By August 1953 the price was reduced in order to sell the remaining copies.

Swinnerton completed *A Month in Gordon Square* on 5 May and it was published on 19 October. His advance was £1100. For the rest of the year he worked on various introductions to new editions of Bennett's novels: *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, *The Old Wives' Tale*, *Clayhanger*, *Riceyman Steps* and edited Bennett's journals. There were also a few articles for *The Radio Times* and a new novel was begun on 1 October. His social highlight was the lunch he arranged for Wilson Midgley and his *John O'London* colleagues, which followed Midgley's retirement in February 1953.

A Month in Gordon Square concerns the emotional and spiritual awakening of the young, bright and deep-thinking Flora Vandal, niece of Eustace Pelham, in whose house the action of the novel takes place. She is asked to act as companion to Camille Everard, a house guest and reluctantly agrees. Mystery about Camille and subsequently Flora's own background complements the development of the latter's understanding of herself and the complexity of the world around her. Amidst the superficial gaiety of London life, in which Flora feels at home, if a little scornful and superior, she sheds the hardness and simplicity of youth as she learns that Camille is Eustace's niece and Flora his illegitimate daughter. Flora is forced to revise her opinion of the people who surround

her and in her new maturity she is able to admit her love for Eustace, to reject a fortune-hunting suitor and to recognise her real partner in Nicholas Howard. Swinnerton has refound his touch. His ability to convey to the reader that in Flora's vision of her surroundings we are to believe the opposite, works consistently well throughout the book. The fast-moving beginning instantly holds the attention and the fact that nothing is as it seems keeps the reader guessing throughout as to every character's intentions. The quality in this story is that the real action takes place beneath the surface of the set scenes, reminiscent of the style of Henry James. In the Bennett manner Swinnerton seems to be telling a straightforward story, but ironically, given his opinion of her work, he comes closer to Woolf in his concentration on thought processes, which probe motive, meaning and intent.

This is also a study of life after fame, when age and absence of family condemn an old man to a rather sad existence amongst sycophants. Viola Garvin in a *Daily Telegraph* review noted that this work 'shows him [Swinnerton] in one of his happiest moods, impish yet kindly.' She goes on to contrast the two girls, highlighting Swinnerton's success in achieving this juxtaposition. 'It is a subtle book. For myself, I shall remember longest the contrasted, graceful girls: stormy Flora, not guessing at her own beauty and talent, yet sturdily aware of a special, honest something in herself;... and Camille, the lovely wise-innocent from France, who is Flora's corrective in every sense'.¹⁵

The Sumner Intrigue was the next novel and it took the whole of 1954 to write. This was partly due to the fact that Swinnerton had a major hernia operation in April. He spent two weeks in a

London nursing home after successful surgery. The convalescence, however, was protracted and he was confined to his bedroom for the whole of May, and did not leave the house until 28 June. A worry at this time was the death of Brincklow, his gardener for almost thirty years. His replacement, Harry Davey, stayed only one year.

Swinerton's celebrated his seventieth birthday on 4 August. He wanted neither fuss nor a party. However, many telegrams and letters of congratulation arrived and he was interviewed by the press. Hutchinsons marked the occasion by sending a dozen bottles of 1934 vintage Gevrey Chambertin. Swinerton capped this momentous month with a heavy fall whilst at the cricket in Hove and was once more sent to bed. He now had more leisure time. *John O'London's Weekly* had folded, Olivia was growing up and did not need day-time supervision, although this was replaced by late evenings awaiting her return from social engagements. After a concentrated period of writing, *The Sumner Intrigue* was completed just before Christmas and Swinerton began to research for an ambitious project, which would give a personal view of the trends and people who had populated the literary scene in the first fifty years of the century. This occupied him during 1955. He began a new novel *The Ten Little Old Ladies*, which he abandoned, but it is possible that the idea resurfaced in the late sixties, when *Sanctuary*, a story set in an old people's home, was published. He wrote a few articles; coped with the death of his agent, F R Steele; signed a new contract with Hutchinsons; saw Olivia off to Vienna, on her first trip abroad without them and later began to teach her to drive. Finally, in October he began another new novel, which would be the first of a series, the only

time Swinnerton re-used characters. It would prove to be an inspired move, which would bring critical acclaim once more to his novels.

Meanwhile, *The Sumner Intrigue* appeared in 1955 to mixed reviews. It is a country novel concerned with the unhappy life of Alec Sumner, an amiable, charming and kindly man, whose wife detests him. The reason for this soon becomes apparent when we learn that Alec had stopped an affair she had begun with a psychiatrist some years before. The status quo is destroyed when two events take place. The first is the arrival in the home of Lucy Stavely, a local girl, who has experienced great unhappiness through the suicide of her sister and the mental breakdown of her mother. This gives Adelaide Sumner the excuse to avenge herself for the humiliation she had suffered all those years ago, and she endeavours to destroy both Alec's professional and personal life using Lucy as her weapon. The second event brings her one-time lover to the town, and this hardens her resolve so much that she will eventually stop at nothing in order to succeed.

The New York Herald Tribune was critical of the characterisation:

Interesting as are the outlines of Swinnerton's plot, the novel as a whole fails to jell into a convincing tale mainly through flaws of characterization. That Adelaide is mad becomes clear, but the doctor in his kindness seems too simple. Outside of the author's own design there seems little reason for Lucy to become a member of the difficult Sumner household, thus becoming a target for scandal and gossip. Nor is the psychiatrist more than a

stereotyped version of a scheming philanderer. Yet so good a craftsman is Swinnerton that one is seduced into following the strange pattern of events with interest.¹⁶

The Sunday Times disagreed. 'Great technical skill, a swift and absorbing story, with excellent characterisation in a background sketched with economical deftness are among the many excellences which make "The Sumner Intrigue" ... his [Swinnerton's] best novel since "The Georgian House"'.¹⁷

The Times found the novel 'too consciously dramatic' and felt the end had been forced, both aspects failing to do justice to Swinnerton's usual 'supple, sensitive style' and 'mellow certainty of touch'.¹⁸ Blair Rouse picks up what he calls 'Henry James's "multiple aspects" device'¹⁹, that is the interpretation different characters give to the same scene, which Rouse considers Swinnerton to have handled superbly. It is certainly well done and quickens the reader's interest. *The Sumner Intrigue* takes us away from Swinnerton's previous novel *A Month In Gordon Square* with its city life and sophisticated intrigue. He has four venues in which to set his scenes: the two noted here, with the poor London life of his youth and the environment of the theatre making up the numbers, and his novels move from location to location at whim. Despite the reviews and unfavourable personal opinions of the novel, it sold well on both sides of the Atlantic and exhausted the first edition in the USA by 13 February 1956. It was also the June 1956 Book of the Month choice for Odham's Book Club.

In 1956 Swinnerton completed the first of his novel series, *The Woman From Sicily* and began immediately on its sequel. He

wrote several articles and short stories and a series of six broadcasts for the BBC. The subject matter was varied. In 'All On A Summer's Day'²⁰ he describes the Centenary cricket celebrations, which took place in Cranleigh on 24 June and brought to the village a visiting side of first class cricketers. He comments on the new clock for the pavilion which had been bought for the occasion, but does not admit that as president of the club he had been asked to unveil it on 30 June. In 'Written Dialogue'²¹ he discusses the problems of dialogue in novels and compares his early use of dialogue, which he now considers to be embarrassingly poor, with what he would write today. In the past he had relied on presenting dialogue as it would have been spoken in life. Now he can see that theatrical speech works better as it gives the characters the opportunity of expressing themselves and progress the narrative, even if they would not speak in this way outside the pages of fiction. In 'On Walter de la Mare'²² he comments on his superficial acquaintance with the poet and recounts anecdotes and their pleasure in each other's company and conversation on the occasions when they met. He denies that the novel is in decline in 'Eclipse of the Novel'²³, and says that even in the past writers such as Bennett and Galsworthy often sold few copies of their work. As he gives a brief overview of fiction from the eighteenth century, he attempts to show that it is not television which is taking readers away but the fact that the novel has lost its form.

In June 1956 Martin Secker, through the Richards Press published a pamphlet written by Swinnerton called *The Adventures of a Manuscript*. It was a limited edition of 1500 copies and in its twenty-five pages Swinnerton traces the story of *The Ragged*

Trousered Philanthropists from the discovery of the manuscript, the massive task of editing its 250,000 words by Jessie Pope, its publication by Grant Richards and its subsequent revival. He glances at the content, the humour with which the author describes working class life and the rise of socialism. Swinnerton concludes with the loss and subsequent discovery of the manuscript by a socialist, F C Ball and ends happily with it safely in the keeping of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives and the availability of the full text to all who wish to relive the story of housepainters in turn-of-the-century Hastings.

Swinnerton's main recreation of 1956 was a series of visits with Mary and Olivia to the Old Vic throughout the year to see a season of Shakespeare plays. Meanwhile another book was conceived. During his talks for the BBC about authors he knew, he had been offered a contract to continue the series. He had declined on the grounds that he had covered all his colleagues, so the idea was developed that he should talk about authors he had never met, and the slight book *Authors I Never Met* is the record of these talks, with the addition of a portrait of Norman Douglas. Swinnerton studies the works and faces of these men from portraits and deduces what they must have been like from these, plus anecdotes which he had heard from friends. They are incisive portraits, though superficial, and concentrate on a particular known aspect of the character of each man. Each section ends with an attempt to guess at why the author felt the way he did. It is an interesting sketch giving an unusual angle to Thomas Hardy, Henry James, D H Lawrence, George Saintsbury, Joseph Conrad and finally Norman Douglas.

Background With Chorus was published in June 1956 with some misgivings on Swinnerton's part. It had been written amidst many interruptions and he was concerned about its quality. In his introduction he states that it is not a work of documentary research, but is meant to serve a social function through anecdotes, memory and hearsay. He wants to give a rounded picture of the literary world at the beginning of the century and feels this is best done by a look at the personalities of the main protagonists, not an analysis of their work. Swinnerton's plan was to cover the first fifty years of the century and divide it into two volumes, the first being *Background With Chorus*. The sequel, *Figures in the Foreground* would complete the picture. In the first part of the book he sets the scene at the turn of the century, and gives a vivid account of his early days in the book world, an evocative, tangible picture of a more leisurely bygone age where the Grand Old Men were Meredith, Hardy and Swinburne. We progress to the new era, epitomised in its introspection and psychoanalysis by Freud and Bergson and the interest in science and technology as expounded by H G Wells. He breathes life into the figures of Ernest Rhys, the editor of *Everyman's Library*, and the cripple William Macdonald and on we move to Arthur Symonds, T W H Crosland, Clement Shorter and W Robertson Nicoll. Names file relentlessly past: Edward Lang, Edmund Gosse, Austin Dobson, G K Chesterton and many more. The latter half covers the years after 1910 to the end of the decade and the spotlight falls on Edward Garnett, Harley Granville Barker, Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy, J B Pinker, the Murry /Mansfield coterie, Gibbs, and Belloc.

In its sequel, Swinnerton confesses that he had been criticised for the obscurity of some of his references and the enormous amount of facts he had crammed into the work. He admitted it was crowded and in *Figures in the Foreground* he kept a more leisurely pace. But its very clutter allows space to lesser-known figures who are often passed over in other literary works. This fault, notwithstanding, it is an absorbing and instructive work, which attracted good reviews. 'Here is a fascinating book of literary table talk widely acclaimed by critics, booksellers, librarians and the general public in England' declares the *Birmingham News*.²⁴ And the American *Books and Bookmen* comments intuitively 'his book is essentially a love song to a yesterday full of genial and amusing memories'²⁵.

Doubleday had declined to take the work as they felt it had little potential in the USA. However, Farrar and Rhinehart took the risk and bought 500 copies for US distribution. It was a publication of quality and was much appreciated by his friends, especially by Garfield Howe, who on 21 July 1956 wrote to Swinnerton:

The real value of the book, which will get its recognition in due course, is the revealing portrait of Frank Swinnerton, an obscure boy who did marvels with his very limited opportunities. It is the tone of the book which is so admirable,- neither boastful nor deprecating, but all the time just right ...everything falling into place - and the retentiveness of experience, and the certainty of judgement.

The book was a success and was reprinted in May 1957.

Swinerton spent 1957 writing the sequel to *A Woman From Sicily*, which he had begun in 1956 and would not complete until 10 March 1958. He undertook a rare trip away from home, to Leeds, on 6 February, where he gave a talk to the Association of Yorkshire Bookmen on the occasion of their ninth annual dinner. His comments about the trend in the publishing world to become big business and the loss of character, individuality and the leisurely pace of half a century ago, were reported in the *Yorkshire Post*. At home Olivia passed her driving test and was preparing to leave home.

This year he was to be regularly in the press. A short story, 'Soho Night's Entertainment' appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in January. This is an atmospheric story, but is spoiled by a weak denouement and lack of inspiration: the composition is tired and unoriginal. 'Lost Literary Journals'²⁶ gives a good overview of the quality and breadth of book reviewing before the First World War, when known writers attracted long reviews, first-time authors were taken seriously and literary journals abounded. A second journalistic piece, 'Never Meet an Author'²⁷ advises the reader never to meet his favourite author as his illusions will be shattered. The most interesting articles were the ones about Swinerton himself. On 2 February 1957 *The Surrey Mirror and Weekly Press* printed an article by L W Bromley who had interviewed Swinerton at home and had been impressed. 'Though an accomplished man of letters, Mr Swinerton is quiet and unassuming in character, one of the most courteous and kindly gentlemen it had been my good fortune to meet' We learn that his most enjoyed journalistic work had been the 'Gog and Magog' letters, that *The*

Georgian House had been his most successful novel to date, and had sold 200,000 copies, that as he grows older he feels the need to make more revisions to his work in order to achieve the perfection he knows is unattainable, that his closest friends now are Compton Mackenzie, St John Ervine, Siegfried Sassoon and H M Tomlinson. It is a well written article and gives a genuine flavour of the man who still works a six hour day at the age of seventy-two. In fact, this hard work had become a worry to some of his friends. On 10 October, Samuel Ratcliffe wrote to urge him to give himself a sabbatical as he was in danger of overwork. As if in reply Swinnerton added to his commitments by accepting the presidency of the Authors' Club in November.

If Swinnerton refused to retire, his brother Phil decided to call it a day at the age of seventy-eight. Phil had not enjoyed quite his brother's success, but had nevertheless achieved some fame. He had begun work as an apprentice lithographer with Eyre and Spottiswoode but was soon drawing for periodicals such as *Comic Cuts* and *Chips*. Overwork caused a breakdown before the First World War. After seeing active service he was taken on by the Amalgamated Press, where he combined the editorial and artist's job on *Playtime*, *Wonderland Tales* and *Chicks Own*, before losing the editorship in a reorganisation. He continued working as a commercial artist and a journalist for other publications including *Rover* and *Boy's Own*. By the time of his retirement he was a respected figure in his chosen field. However he was unable to enjoy many years of retirement as he died in January 1963 and his obituary appeared on the front page of *The London Evening News & Star* on the 31 January of that year.

The Woman From Sicily appeared in 1957 and takes place around the years of the First World War. It is dominated by the evil Mrs Grace senior, yet she is absent from most of the action. It is set in East Anglia in the sleepy town of Prothero, where her past sins are visited on her son, Jerome, who has married Swinnerton's most endearing, compassionate and forgiving character, Mary. Old Mrs Grace had betrayed her husband with the local solicitor, Hector Barraway many years before, and this jealous, hate-filled woman now contrives to kill him, simultaneously attempting to destroy her weak son and his successful marriage by allowing suspicion for the murder to fall on Jerome. She cannot succeed because the virtue of Mary will inevitably thwart her plans. Swinnerton has brought off the two main characters with great finesse. He could have easily portrayed old Mrs Grace as a caricature, yet he creates a woman whose bitterness we can understand as we are shown how her perceived torments have affected her soul. Mary Grace too could easily have become an insipid heroine if Swinnerton had not injected into her such humanity and understanding that the reader finds himself behind her at every move. The development of the plot is always convincing and Barraway's death is handled with such a masterly manner that one might be reading suspense fiction. A minor figure is introduced, in the form of Tom Tamplin, who is destined to play a major role in the sequels, but who, for the moment acts as Mary's support when events seem beyond redemption. The characters of her three children are also being developed: the quiet, thoughtful elder son, Philip; his wayward, attention-seeking brother Raymond; and the child, Janie, loved but unspoiled. All

three in future novels will develop these characteristics so that they will affect their actions and their lives.

There is a sense of Victorianism in the book and Fanny Butcher in a US newspaper takes up this angle. 'It is Victorian in the fact that it has a carefully carpented plot and is written in a flowing leisurely style. The tale is almost half told before the reader realizes how, page by page, the tenseness of plot has been growing.'²⁹ The book was taken by Doubleday under the title *Episode Barraway*. Within two weeks of its publication there on 18 July 1957 it had sold out of its first edition of 5500 copies and a further 2000 were printed. The paperback rights were sold by Hutchinson to Brown Watson Ltd. (Digit Books) in July 1960.

The sequel, *A Tigress in Prothero* was completed on 10 March 1958 and the third volume commenced one month afterwards, but was written spasmodically as heavy gardening commitments took up much of Swinnerton's time. Olivia was working in London for an Australian firm in the City and visited her childhood home at weekends. Her adulthood was confirmed with her twenty-first birthday on the 26 July. Although Swinnerton wrote some articles he declined requests to speak as he clearly no longer felt the need to travel and perhaps he had said all he had wanted to say on the platform. His final speaking engagement was to the Authors' Club on 25 February 1959 on the subject of 'What Publishers Think of Authors'. Despite his desire for a retiring life he had heavy domestic and social commitments and he would often be found asleep in the afternoons in an effort to keep persistent tiredness at bay. Background work on *Figures in the Foreground* and slow progress on *The Young Graces* (later to be retitled *The Grace*

Divorce) occupied his working day, whilst regular visits to Philip Gibbs, a neighbour and friend took up some of his free time. Another friend was lost when L A G Strong died in September. Swinnerton's output was no longer as great as before as he needed more time to write and correct. As a result his income had fallen. It fluctuated in the 1950s between £3500 and £1500 and in 1958 he ceased keeping detailed accounts in his diary.

The Grace Divorce progressed slowly. By the beginning of 1959 only 76 pages had been written and Swinnerton felt disquiet and depression about it. One diary entry comments that he had a 'sense that it is much too slow and uneventful'. Whilst he struggled on with it he lost two old friends in Pauline Smith and Ernest Yeoman. New correspondents were increasingly asking him for information about the men he had known, old ones were confirming their own knowledge through him, and editors were asking for contributions on such writers as De Quincey and Somerset Maugham. Whilst still on the Royal Literary Fund, Cranleigh Cricket Club and Cranleigh Band committees, he was cutting down on other commitments which took up his time and drew him away from home.

Three incidents which occurred during the year, whilst insignificant in themselves, show a more vulnerable and tetchy side to Swinnerton. In September he wrote to the Sussex County Cricket Club announcing his intention to cancel his membership as Olivia and Mary had been publicly humiliated by a rude attendant, who had refused them permission to remain in the pavilion. In October he received a solicitor's letter asking if he would consider selling four feet of land to a new neighbour who wanted access to her cottage for a car. Swinnerton was so distressed by

the proposal that the request was speedily withdrawn. Finally, also in October, there was talk of *John O'London's Weekly* being revived and Swinnerton had been approached to take up a column again, but not as John O'London. Feeling he was being used by the new management, he firmly refused.

A Tigress in Prothero was published in 19 January 1959 and early permission was given by Hutchinson for it to be transcribed into braille. In the Graces' life it is now 1921. Old Mrs Grace is dead, Jerome has a stroke caused by past emotional scars and ill-judged business ventures. His resultant paralysis forces Mary, the fierce protector of her family, to become the breadwinner and she sets up a small dress shop in Prothero. The children grow up. Jane is apprenticed to Madame Rose's fashionable haute couture premises in London, and Raymond studies art and develops some of old Mrs Grace's less likeable traits. The book is mainly concerned with 'Jerome's downfall and Jane's initiation into the conflicts of adult passion, with glimpses into Raymond's bumbling activities. Over the vicissitudes of the family life presides the strong character and spiritual serenity of Mary Grace. Never sentimentalized, Mary is the embodiment of a sturdy, yet never domineering spirit, powerful but never seeking power.'²⁹

Swinnerton in the four-year span of the novel shows in his portrayal of Mary Grace's attempts to start a ladies' circle in Prothero how the role of women was changing after the War. New characters are introduced which affect the lives of the Graces, and the story moves away from the original characters. However, too many loose ends and unresolved situations leave behind a feeling of dissatisfaction with this novel. The denouement for

once does not resolve all the situations, giving a very clear indication of a third book in the offing. Yet Philip Gibbs and Richard Church both thought the book well done, especially the portrayal of the children, now taking their place in a modern world. The Director of the BBC had enjoyed it so much that he had wanted to serialise it in *Woman's Hour*, but it did not lend itself to being divided up. Norah Hoult in a letter to Swinnerton on 24 January 1959 praised its vigour and excitement. Under the title *A Tigress in the Village* it was published in the USA on 18 June 1959 and had sold 4000 copies in a fortnight. Swinnerton's royalties were \$1360.

The Grace Divorce was completed on 29 September 1959 after a long spell of concentrated writing, was dedicated to Philip Gibbs and was published on 15 August 1960 to a multitude of reviews. It is 1937 and Mary moves into the background where, now that Jerome is dead, she can finally admit her love for Tom and they are planning to marry. Philip is married and plays little part in the action, which revolves mainly round Raymond who, frustrated by his apparent lack of success has married a scheming actress, Charmian, and Jane, with Madame Rose's death is offered a share in the salon by her partner Yves Hilary, who also proposes to her. Mary is dangerously injured in a car accident, and Raymond discovers that Charmian is being unfaithful with Yves. Thus he divorces her and Jane is spared the misfortune of falling into the hands of an unscrupulous adventurer. Rouse brings out the major criticisms of the novel well.

The Grace Divorce ... lacks the effectiveness of the earlier Grace novels for three reasons: First, the action depends almost entirely upon the sexual intrigues of Charmian and Yves and the consequent entrapment of Raymond and Jane; Mary Grace is too much in the background. Second, neither Charmian nor Yves Hilary has sufficient strength of personality to be interesting; they both smack too much of the stock figures of the temptress and the dark, foreign villain. As far as Raymond is concerned, Charmian's power over him is sufficiently plausible; Ray is fated for foolishness. But Jane in character does not seem to be a probable victim for so superficial an egotist as Yves. Third, this novel is too extensively devoted to the not especially edifying or interesting bumbblings of Raymond, who is really a bore to himself as well as to others.³⁰

It is true that the main protagonists in this novel are unsympathetic. Mary needs to be out of the way in order that Jane and Raymond are fooled, otherwise one cannot believe that Mary would have allowed such folly. Also one or two loose ends are allowed to remain and so upset the ultimate balance of the story.

Richard Church in his praise for the book likened its technique to that of Wilkie Collins. *The Bridgeport Sunday Post* compared Swinnerton's achievement to Jane Austen and Henry James and considers it 'a quiet story, without sensational or embarrassingly detailed intimacies, that depends, for its conflict, on the misunderstanding and fascinations which grow between individuals of different social and national backgrounds'.³¹ Other reviews comment on Swinnerton's masterly

ability at telling a story in his unhurried manner and yet are mildly irritated by the 'niceness' of the book. Swinnerton himself was pleased with the reviews, even the adverse ones, which were an indication that he was still worth reviewing.

At the end of the year Swinnerton began a new novel, provisionally titled *Kaleidoscope*, and he worked on this with some doubt as to its quality throughout 1960. It was to become *Death of a Highbrow*, which when published in 1961 would attract some critical acclaim. He also fitted in his usual journalistic pieces, an article on 'Libraries I have Known', which follows his early reading in a library housed in a room of the local Highgate Unitarian Chapel, through his visits to the British Library and British Museum, to his own personal library.³² A review of Leonard Woolf's *Sowing* delves into the makings of the Bloomsbury Set and gives a surprisingly complimentary opinion of Virginia Woolf, probably because Swinnerton felt that Woolf herself had been honest about his own work.³³

Swinnerton was seventy-six. He was growing tired and would only leave Cranleigh when a particular appointment was pressed on him. He had long lost the urge to frequent London's literary corners and was happy easing himself slowly into old age at Old Tokefield. To him his happiness depended on the people whom he loved and as long as Mary and Olivia were close and well he was content.

Chapter 18

GRAND OLD MAN OF LETTERS

1961-1969

The last ten years had established a routine for the Swinnertons, which they continued to follow with very little variation over the next twenty-two. His visits to London were usually on business and, as most of his friends were either dead or had moved away, he would, on occasions, find himself dining at the Reform Club alone. His pleasures were still gardening, helped by a new gardener, Mr Harrington. He actively enjoyed clipping his hedges as he found the action therapeutic, conducive to contemplation of events of the past and an opportunity to reconsider the plots of his latest novel.

In 1961 Swinnerton abandoned his dislike of the telephone and one was installed in Old Tokefield, as a result of which Olivia was able more easily to keep in touch with her parents as she travelled round the world as an air hostess, although she would still endeavour to visit them as often as she was in the country. Swinnerton was kept extremely busy, not only with his writing but with endless requests to involve himself in good causes. Towards the end of the year he was invited to become a governor of Elmbridge School and in December Rupert Hart-Davis raised the question of Swinnerton becoming the President of the Royal Literary Fund. He was elected and served in this capacity from 1962 to 1966.

The friendship between Hart-Davis and Swinnerton had begun in April 1950 when Hart-Davis had asked Swinnerton if he could use letters written by Walpole to Swinnerton to assist a biography he

was preparing. They subsequently met at the Garrick Club on 19 April to discuss the project over lunch. Early in 1952 Hart-Davis sent Swinnerton an inscribed copy of the Walpole biography and Swinnerton was amused and pleased with it, not minding the occasional unflattering reference to himself. Their correspondence dealt with literary matters, Hart-Davis often asking for information about people such as the Pinkers, and about Arnold Bennett for a biography Reginald Pound was planning. Opinions and comments were exchanged and much space was given to discussions of Royal Literary Fund business. Swinnerton believed his election as President was as a result of Hart-Davis's 'magnificent lobbying'. Hart-Davis recalls Swinnerton's lack of seriousness when on one occasion during a committee meeting the two men gossiped by writing notes to each other on the back of the order paper.² Typical of both men was their concern for the troubles of their fellow writers. Many letters expressed concern about Secker's financial position. Later Harold Nicolson came under scrutiny. In the 1970s letters dealt with the question of letting Sassoon's letters go to the University of Arkansas following pressure from Blair Rouse to purchase them. Few letters dealt with personal matters. They became fewer as time passed and in the last one, dated 22 November 1981 Swinnerton talks of his failing sight. At the time of his death, he was reading the fourth volume of the *Lyttelton-Hart-Davis Letters* in hospital. Hart-Davis continued his support after this time by offering to assist Olivia should she need advice over literary matters.

As soon as he had finished *Death of a Highbrow* on the 22 February Swinnerton began intensive background reading for his

sequel to *Background With Chorus, Figures in the Foreground*, the basis of which would be his correspondence with Walpole. Time was also found to prepare a broadcast for the BBC on the subject of Daisy Ashford and to write an article for the Autumn number of *The Library Review*, in which he remembered the launch of the Everyman's Library while he was working at Dent's.

The publication of *Death of a Highbrow* on 30 October in the UK and 4 May 1962 by Doubleday in the USA, brought a multitude of reviews. It was very well received and within a month of its release in the USA it was reprinted. The real time span of the novel is a matter of days commencing with the funeral of Tom Curtal, a friend of octogenarian Graham Stanhope and ends with the death of the latter. However, the novel covers the sixty years of bitter, jealous rivalry between the two men both in work and in love, which Stanhope is forced to recall through a series of unpleasant jolts which blight his final days. These commence with Curtal's funeral and are fueled by a luncheon with friends, an interview for a BBC programme about Curtal's life and the visits of John White, Curtal's biographer and secret illegitimate son, who in his antagonistic way forces Stanhope to reassess his memory of events.

Stanhope is a highbrow, an arrogant man of letters whose life has been devoted to his social ambition, and in pursuing this end he betrayed his friends and family. Curtal was coarse and vulgar, but talent, honesty and loyalty made him the greater man and Stanhope is finally forced to realise this and accept that, whilst he has been a social success, it is Curtal who has been the victor in talent, love and life. Swinnerton has used his vast knowledge

of literary figures to populate this work of literary history and the creation of Stanhope as an anti-hero betrays his own dislike of this type of man. It is the first of his books which presents a rounded view of old age. As Swinnerton was increasingly forced to reminisce and remember old times by eager students and journalists, so he forces Stanhope to endure the same torments.

Praise was heaped on the work. Rouse commented on its high standards. 'Death of a Highbrow exhibits Swinnerton's prose style at its scintillating best, as it is here most effectively fitted to the requirements of the work in hand: the diction is precise, unambiguous, carrying every shade of desired meaning; the sentences are skillfully varied in length, structure, and rhythm to give an effect of intelligent, lively exposition.'³ Richard Church 'downed tools and gave myself up to it until far into the night. It is one of your most subtle and impressive. Your unwinding of the spool of Stanhope's life and character is masterly'.⁴ Philip Gibbs found the originality of the idea fascinating, but the characters depressingly unlikeable. Norah Hoult too was 'somewhat depressed by the appalling [sic] picture it gives of the vanities of the literary life at top level!'⁵

Newspaper reports overwhelmingly praised the work. it was 'soundly satisfactory'⁶, 'as good as anything he has written'.⁷ It 'combines psychological brilliance, quiet wit and gentle irony. The result is delightful. ... a brilliant study of the mind and life of a heartless egoist and cold careerist. It is also an engrossing narrative full of dramatic incidents. One reads with rapt attention'.⁸ *The Lady* found 'there is an effect of authenticity about this ingeniously-unwrapped story'⁹, *The*

Spectator described it as 'fascinating and at times rather touching'.¹⁰ *The Times* commented 'The genuine copper-bottomed novel-reader's novel is becoming a rare article these days; only a few old hands can still be relied upon to produce it. Mr Frank Swinnerton is one such reliable craftsman.' Over thirty more reviews follow the same vein and use such epithets as 'memorable', 'outstanding', 'exquisite', 'moving', 'stunning', 'tantalizing', 'shrewd', 'excellent', 'refreshing'.

This is not just a light novel, but has focused all of Swinnerton's thoughts and feelings about a literary world gone by, populated by men of complex emotions and actions. He has produced a work of such complexity and so rich in ideas and perceptions, that it is intellectually demanding to read and requires steady concentration in order that a complete understanding can be achieved. Swinnerton considered it his best novel and the one by which he wished to be remembered. One can see why.

Throughout 1962 Swinnerton worked on *Figures in the Foreground* and completed it in November. On 10 March Philip Gibbs died. Gibbs had become one of Swinnerton's closest friends. Their first known letters date from April 1934 and continue until Gibbs's death at 84. Gibbs made his name as a war correspondent and Swinnerton paints an affectionate picture of him in *Figures in the Foreground*. Gibbs lived close to Cranleigh and the two men had been close companions. His death left a vacuum in Swinnerton's life.

Swinnerton also had the extra responsibility of his wife's ailing Aunt Sadie and she was installed at Old Tokefield to be cared for in her last days. No doubt feeling a need to put his own

house in order Swinnerton inscribed all his manuscripts to Mary so that their ownership in event of his demise should be without question. In Autumn an article appeared in Number 143 of *The Library Review* which, under the title 'Writing for the Public', expressed Swinnerton's view of what constituted a readable and popular novel. Dismissing bestsellers as being unable to stand the test of time, he suggests that the genuinely good book is the one which has been written with sincerity and has struck an answering chord in the reader.

The death of his brother Phil at the end of January was a heavier blow than other losses. In a letter to Jamie Hamilton on 22 June, Swinnerton admits to his feelings of mortality because of so many deaths. He especially misses five men: Phil, Arnold Bennett, Philip Gibbs, Jimmy Horsnell and P P Howe. Perhaps his first overseas holiday for over ten years, taken in April, was an attempt to put aside his sadness. This trip to Majorca and Ibiza with Mary and Olivia was so enjoyable and relaxing that he returned with reluctance. It was to be his last holiday abroad, although he lived for a further nineteen years.

Swinnerton began work on *Quadrille*, the last of the Grace novels, and wrote an introduction to Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. He also attended a Foyle luncheon in honour of Compton Mackenzie's eightieth birthday, recorded a programme for the BBC as a memorial to St John Ervine, witnessed the publication of the third edition of *Nocturne*, and began background reading for his next critical work on fathers of literary women, *A Galaxy of Fathers*. His seventy-ninth birthday brought a multitude of

telegrams, letters, telephone calls and notices in *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and a call from *The Yorkshire Post*.

The foundation of *Figures in the Foreground*, which was published in 1963, was letters exchanged between Swinnerton and Hugh Walpole during the first half of the century. These had been inherited by Hart-Davis and he had loaned them to Swinnerton before selling them to the University of Arkansas. Many of them dealt in detail with events in the literary world at the time and the people and books which formed part of it. In his earlier work, *Background With Chorus* Swinnerton had relied on memory and letters to Garfield Howe, who had subsequently praised the work. 'Your strength lies in your interest in persons - the man behind the name' but had also been critical of the content. 'The trouble with this book is that there are so few contemporaries who can understand the background in the light of the accumulated facts'.¹² Swinnerton admitted that it had been too crowded and resolved to write in more detail about fewer characters.

To the literary contents of these letters Swinnerton adds his personal reminiscences and creates a fine work, which brings to life some of the major and not so well remembered characters, who flourished between the years of 1917 and 1940. The letters themselves 'make a nice contrast: Swinnerton cool, skeptical, the embodiment of common sense; Walpole enthusiastic, impulsive, avid of popularity and success almost to the point of morbidity. No question, Walpole emerges as more than slightly absurd'.¹³ The character of Walpole is given much prominence in the work and his portrait is astutely painted, with its complexity and contradiction. From Walpole, Swinnerton moves on to Somerset

Maugham and Elizabeth, Countess Russell, the sister-in-law of Bertrand and the 'Elizabeth' of literary fame. The section devoted to her and her cousin, Katherine Mansfield - the only person she had ever feared - is quite superb and masterly and brings both characters vividly to life. On to Middleton Murry, Jo Davidson, E V Lucas, more of Arnold Bennett, predictable comments on Bloomsbury, some journalists, among whom Philip Gibbs, Robert Lynd, James Bone and H M Tomlinson figure prominently. Walter de la Mare, James Stephens and Siegfried Sassoon lead the poets' section. T S Eliot has a chapter to himself. A look at the difficulties faced by US writers in their attempts to break into the UK market, and another at the nature of bestsellers, brings the reader to the final chapter, in which Swinnerton describes his own character. It is a familiar picture, but worth repeating as it probably constitutes his own definitive view of himself. He emphasises his sense of humour, his acceptance of who he is, his imperviousness to criticism and ability to understand and sympathise with other people's beliefs and failings. This, he believes, makes him a good reviewer. His idea of earthly happiness is a day's cricket at Hove with his wife and daughter.

The reviews were good, as was common whenever he produced this type of work. 'This is the sort of book that you take up and have difficulty in laying down', wrote *The Library Review*.¹⁴ Richard Church wrote in *Country Life* 'He is an admirable historian of his times, as displayed by its writers. His shrewd benevolence is unique'.¹⁵ Church goes on to say 'His complete candour as a critic is beyond all price. Even where he is not wholly in sympathy with an author's work, he takes the trouble to explore it with

appreciative interest'. Winston Graham wrote to Swinnerton on 16 December 1963 'There's no one can write that type of book quite like you, or with the wisdom or the breadth of knowledge or the wit'.

Other reviews, of which there were many, pick up on different aspects of the work, recounting their own favourite anecdotes and being critical when Swinnerton's view of a particular writer does not correspond with their own, although they admit that he has portrayed them without malice or idolatry. However, they all agree that Swinnerton's own character comes out well. A criticism from the US press was the fact that minor figures cluttered the pages. However, it is this very point which adds realism to the account and which should be valued, as being a rare opportunity to learn in some detail about the character of figures whose star had been eclipsed and who have long gone out of fashion.

Swinnerton completed *Quadrille*, the last Grace book at the beginning of 1964 and began extensive background research for *A Galaxy of Fathers*. As his eightieth birthday approached he was exhausted with recording BBC programmes, giving a rare talk to the Charles Lamb Society, a visit from Ursula, who had arrived from Australia, another Royal Garden Party on 21 July and the fuss caused over the sale of many letters and manuscripts to Arkansas University in April. These totalled 4000 letters and included extensive correspondence from Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy and incidental letters from such people as De la Mare and Dylan Thomas. Blair Rouse had initiated the sale. The manuscripts, dating from 1923, which he had inscribed to Mary were also sold. The Swinnertons had considered the sale for some time and had

decided that 'few people in England would want my manuscripts, but in America they had a collective value. If I had really been a free agent I would have preferred them to go to the British Museum, but they would not want my manuscripts'.¹⁶ He and Mary had agreed that as he was getting rather old 'it would not be a bad idea to sell them and get the lolly now'.¹⁷ The 'lolly' amounted to 'something under £5000'. He told *The Evening Standard* 'In the old days, I used to destroy them until the maid told me the paper was too stiff for firelighting'.¹⁸

His birthday brought several calls from journalists, a case of wine from Doubledays, flowers from Hutchinsons and a champagne lunch in the presence of Mary and Olivia. The GPO had an awful day delivering telegrams and letters, but they 'added to an American cable a postscript of their own: "And so say all of us. Your friends at the GPO"'.¹⁹ He had a marvellous day and enjoyed the fuss, but spent the next week answering his well-wishers. The journalists' articles appeared, giving news of his daily working routine and his contentment with life. A radio programme went out after the News at 10 on the 16 August as a tribute to his achievement and longevity. His year was completed with a Foyles Literary Luncheon in honour of J B Priestley where Swinnerton sat with Rumer Godden, Iris Murdoch, Ralph Richardson, Richard Church, and Earl Attlee.

1964 and 1965 were years of further deaths. Winifred Nerney, Bennett's former secretary died. Ursula Rowley passed away, as did Nora Ervine towards the end of 1965, and Somerset Maugham in December. But Swinnerton worked on. He finished *A Galaxy of Fathers* in March and immediately began work on *Sanctuary*, a novel

about a retirement home. He also began tentative work on another novel about two sisters, which he concentrated on after *Sanctuary* had been completed on 12 November. It was a quiet year, with the greatest pleasures being the visits of old friends such as Norah Hoult and the Seckers.

Quadrille was published in the UK in February 1965 and in the USA on 21 May. The Grace family has now reached the year 1960 and it is the turn of Philip's family to be caught in the spotlight. Raymond and Jane, whose lives had been detailed in the earlier books of the series have moved on to other pastures and Philip has produced a third child, Laura, who is the pivot of this story. She is a talented pianist and embroils herself with the young smart set in London society, which is to bring her anguish and pain. The crisis in her life is contained into ten days. Philip is portrayed as a serene painter, who inspires everyone's trust. His wife, Dulcie's character is shown to be strong and firm. Mary and Tom are now old but her serene and loving character still permeates the book. Laura is in love with Lance Thomas, an ageing charmer and is friendly with the young, elegant but ruthless feminist, Imogen Herkomer, who, unknown to her, is Lance's mistress. Imogen commits suicide out of jealousy at Lance's cottage while he is away, when she discovers he has been courting Laura, leaving behind a vindictive letter which would ruin Lance's reputation and besmirch Laura's. However, the inquest avoids mention of the letter and Laura is saved but has acquired the wisdom to reject Lance and turns to Steve Purley, another promising pianist, who has been patiently waiting for her.

The novel follows the same formula of previous ones, where men are allowed their sexual mistakes, but decent women are pulled back from the brink. Good is good, bad is bad and good always triumphs. Swinnerton's sympathy for the young and empathy with women, evident from his first novel onwards, can still be seen at work here. The brittleness and shallowness of bohemian society are also well portrayed, though there is too much of an atmosphere of bygone days and it is difficult to believe that this is England in the 1960s. Swinnerton in his preface accepted that he had not achieved his wish of showing the world of the modern young woman. Perhaps by this time he was more of an onlooker and could not absorb the feelings of the time as a participant would have done.

The reviews were many and adequate. They made much of Swinnerton's age and his ability to continue writing entertaining fiction. But they were not glowing:

Finishing this book you wonder why you were taken with it. It raises no great issues, its various parts often seem to have a tenuous connection, the motivation of its principal action can be justifiably questioned. After some thinking you decide that all the novel did was to show you fragments of various lives as seen through such clear eyes that your own take on a new discernment and some of the wisdom of a wise man.²⁰

Although the *Daily Telegraph* allows that 'Swinnerton is still the grand professional, the upper-middlebrow of enviable skill',²¹ This novel completes Swinnerton's experiment with sequels. Each novel stands on its own and little of the atmosphere of earlier

ones is transferred to the next. The most successful sequences in them are the ones which concern the inspired creation of Mary Grace, the outstanding character of all of Swinnerton's works.

Extreme cold, a recurrence of neuralgia and a debilitating chill brought on a disinclination to work early in 1966. The whole year was unsatisfactory. He gave up the presidency of the Royal Literary Fund, much to Rupert Hart-Davis's sadness. Swinnerton was overworked, found the train journeys to London increasingly irksome, and felt it needed a dynamic younger President who could overhaul the RLF's image. The Fund had been established to assist authors and their families who were in distress. They needed to have produced work of literary merit to qualify. It had been founded in 1790 and was now the largest and oldest charitable fund of its kind. Through benefactions and legacies and the support of the government's Civil List it has been able to help writers for more than 150 years. Some notable cases assisted in the past were Thomas Love Peacock, Leigh Hunt, Joseph Conrad, D H Lawrence, James Joyce and Dylan Thomas. Swinnerton had been active in helping fellow writers less fortunate than himself.

A Galaxy of Fathers was published to excellent reviews in January and *Sanctuary* appeared in the autumn. But little flowed from Swinnerton's pen. He worked sporadically on *Bright Lights* and it was still uncompleted at the end of the year. A short story appeared in the *Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine* in October²², which was poorly constructed, had no twists, was bland and dull. Swinnerton attended two Foyles luncheons, one on the 11 March, which opened National Library Week at which Anthony Crosland spoke, and the second on 1 June, which honoured Beverley Nichols

and brought Swinnerton into the company of Barbara Cartland. Also in June a crew of eight to ten people from BBC television invaded Old Tokefield for three days and caused him havoc and exhaustion as he recalled memories of Wells for the projected programme. He was paid twenty-five guineas, had to feed the crew, appeared for only a few minutes in the edited version and swore he would never consent again. To complete a hectic June, Phil's wife, Louie, died and Swinnerton attended her funeral in London on the 25th. His friends kept his spirits up with regular letters. These numbered Norah Hoult, Jamie Hamilton, Robert Lusty and Martin Secker.

In *A Galaxy of Fathers* Swinnerton examines the influence of five men on their literary offspring in the eighteenth century. His first section deals with Anna Seward and her rather unpleasant father, Thomas Seward, Canon of Lichfield. Samuel Johnson shared Swinnerton's dislike of the man and after a mere twelve pages Swinnerton moves on to George Crabbe who, although given the same amount of space, is considered a rather better literary figure. His son George wrote his biography emphasising his merits as a father. Swinnerton's achievement in this book is to write about these people without prejudice, showing them exactly as they were. Fanny Burney comes out well from Swinnerton's ruthless realism. A long section describes her father, Charles, who was devoted to the promotion of music, whilst Fanny spent her life in devotion to his well-being. An entertaining and compassionate vision of the sensitive and popular musician emphasising his industry and charm is followed by an extraordinarily interesting account of Fanny's rise to literary fame. From music the scene shifts to the

education of children and the experimentalist Richard Lovell Edgeworth. With four wives and twenty-two children he had ample opportunity to indulge in his Erasmus Darwin and Rousseau inspired philosophy, but only produced one gifted child, Maria, who was to record his life and work. A fascinating account is given of unrest in Ireland at the time. This was Swinnerton's favourite father and a large part of the book is devoted to him. Bringing up the rear is the unpleasant opportunist George Mitford, whose daughter Mary Russell Mitford gave her life to providing money through her writings to keep this embarrassing buffoon in the style to which he wished to be accustomed. All the children's work was influenced by their patriarchs and their independence was curtailed by them, an arrangement which was only possible because they were living in the society to which the eighteenth century had given birth.

The Wall Street Journal considered Swinnerton 'one of the most versatile and prolific of living English writers' and this book to be 'entertaining, gossipy, and also a good deal more'.²³ R O Malcolm begins his review with 'It is always a pleasure to read a book by a Grade A professional who is at once witty, but perceptive, informative, but amusing'.²⁴ Swinnerton was delighted with *The Times* review, and Maurice Wiggin in *The Sunday Times* wrote, 'I think his best non-fiction ... penetrating and illuminating'.²⁵

A completely different theme was taken up in *Sanctuary*, and a very original one, which examined the lives of a group of elderly women, who have lived at peace in a retirement home under the gentle and loving eye of their superintendent, Miss Goodmayes. When this paragon is taken ill, Annie Morgan is appointed as

a temporary replacement. This frustrated spinster believes in a rule of iron, pries into the affairs of the eight women and subconsciously aims to take away their self respect. Conflict brings a crisis and it is the two strongest old ladies, Rose Bloom and Christabel Badcock who lead the defensive revolt. How the battle is won is immaterial. Swinnerton creates incidents of clandestine bicycle rides for help, the appearance of two former school friends of Miss Morgan's to bring retribution in the form of a mild stroke, the arrival of a journalist who senses a story and acts as the rescue party. In the end peace is always going to be restored and Miss Goodmayes will return. But against this unlikely setting with unlikely characters there is such humour, sympathy and fun in the telling that the reader is amused and spellbound throughout. The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer enjoyed the book. 'Swinnerton tells the simple but eventful story with perfect balance and panache'.²⁶ However, it was a brave step to centre his work on elderly people. Swinnerton had introduced the idea in *Death of a Highbrow* and uses it to good effect in his portrayal of Tom Tamplin in *Quadrille*. Reviewers recognised the achievement:

A retirement home for elderly women may seem an unlikely locale for a novel of action. The difference between an ordinary novelist and a mature professional, however, lies in the professional's aptitude for making any human situation seem interesting and even dramatic. ... everybody's life - no matter how insignificant - can have its victories and defeats'.²⁷

Above all this novel was written to entertain and this aim it amply fulfils.

1967 brought a flurry of news from his friends. Rupert Hart-Davis was knighted, Richard Church was to remarry. Olivia extended her travels to Australia, New Zealand and New York. The BBC, which had been constantly using his services since the War approached him again, this time for a programme about Bennett. With the Wells fiasco fresh in his mind, Swinnerton refused. However, Dorothy Cheston Bennett persuaded him to reconsider and a third contract was signed and interviewers and cameramen descended on Old Tokefield again on 9 March and the programme was screened on 27 May. Swinnerton finished his novel *Bright Lights* on 3 May and gave himself up to other pursuits for the Summer months. He began to visit shows in London with Mary, where Olivia would meet them and afterwards drive them home. After he gave up driving in 1971, owing to his age, the state of the roads and pressure from his family, this became a regular event. Yet another Royal Garden Party was attended on 20 July and On Mary's seventieth birthday he took her to Oxford for the day by coach, and with Olivia they all went to see *A Man for All Seasons* in London as part of the treat. He was quite unwell for much of the year, so that Mary had to undertake some of his gardening chores and in September he had an operation in Guildford to remove a rodent ulcer from his left ear. A revised edition of *The Georgian Literary Scene* was in prospect and as well as writing the occasional book review, Swinnerton now began his only 'country' book, *Reflections from a Village* in August. He was unwell again on 2 November when he gave an excellent speech at a Society of Authors dinner at the Savoy

Hotel which marked the centenary of Arnold Bennett's birth. There he saw Winston Graham, who as Chairman had swept aside the Society's reluctance to invite an outside speaker, for the last time, although they would still send an annual letter at Christmas.

Winston Graham had first written to Swinnerton in 1943. When contacted for help in connection with this thesis he sent Swinnerton's early letters to him and wrote a lengthy letter detailing the progress of their relationship. Graham had read Swinnerton's fiction reviews in *The Observer* with special pleasure and sense of instruction and when he learnt that Swinnerton was giving up the position he wrote to thank him for the pleasure he had given. Swinnerton did not recall ever having read any of Graham's novels so, with the same rashness of youth Swinnerton had shown to Bennett thirty years earlier, Graham sent Swinnerton a copy of *Ross Poldark*. An intermittent correspondence followed which was mainly concerned with each other's work and the various merits of publishers. In 1946 after a film had been made of one of Graham's novels, Swinnerton invited him to lunch at the Ivy and Graham went along in some trepidation, being overawed by Swinnerton's great literary reputation. 'I needn't have worried about my conversational gifts; they were not needed. He talked wittily and entertainingly all through lunch, and, tipping the waiter ten shillings - a big sum in those days - he strode out, pausing only to exchange a pleasantry with "Jamie" Hamilton on the way'.²⁰ Graham tells an amusing story about a lunch visit by Swinnerton to the Grahams' fourth-floor flat in Harley Street in the early 1960s which illustrates perfectly Swinnerton's

character. Concerned about the problem the stairs might cause an elderly man:

My wife instructed me to bring him up slowly; there were chairs on each landing and he might well like to rest on the way. However, when he arrived he marched ahead of me up the stairs at a brisk pace talking all the time, & seemed not a bit out of breath when we got to the top. There he presented my wife with a bottle of cointreau before tucking into a large and conversational lunch.²⁹

Throughout the early months of 1968 he made steady progress on *Reflections from a Village* with the usual fears and dissatisfactions about quality and quantity. But it was clearly easier to write than his novels as it was completed on 24 April. He followed this with a booklet for The British Council about Arnold Bennett and started to work on a new novel in September.

Bright Lights was published on 13 May and tells the story of Constance Rotheram from her childhood in a seaside town in 1900 to old age in 1963. It uses the same technique as *Death of a Highbrow*; we see Constance sitting before the fire in her comfortable home, and relive with her her struggle to become a successful actress, the early years treading the boards in dingy provincial theatres, her three marriages, her affairs, her successes and her final defeat when trying to play the lead in a Shakespeare play, for which she is clearly unsuited. In her reminiscences she is forced to look again at the events which made up her life and to see them more clearly through the distance of time. It is her sister Pen, a gentler and more talented

personality who has achieved real success because she found happiness which would be always out of reach to her more ambitious and grasping sister.

Swinerton's knowledge of the theatre brings the scenes vividly before the reader and his sympathy and understanding of human weakness, coupled with a brisk, light and penetrating style, have created a competent, if uninspiring novel set in the past where he feels most at ease. It is interesting to compare his early works, where the time is always the present and the characters representative of the youth of the period. Unlike many of his works, there is no happy ending here. The usual sense of well-being is replaced by a feeling of discontent at something wasted in Constance's life and that this vaguely unpleasant character had been upstaged by her life long rival, the sister she had always feared.

Reviews were complimentary and touched on Swinerton's sensitivity, his amusement with his characters, his intelligence, his ability to write a refreshing, entertaining and clean novel in an age of sex and profanity, and his sense of the traditional. *The Stage* pays tribute to his knowledge. 'He is a keen observer and one imagines he must have spent a lifetime in the theatre to have become so closely acquainted with so many different aspects of it'³⁰. Whilst the reviewer in *The Times* notes, 'Swinerton retains an astonishing ability to make even the most minor characters alive and convincing. It is this quality which makes *The Bright Lights* both funny and moving'³¹.

Age and illness was beginning to show in his diaries. Pencil entries had been abandoned for ink and the writing had become

extremely shaky and at times difficult to decipher. During the first half of 1969 Swinnerton completed his latest novel *On the Shady Side* (the working title had been *Eclipse*). He also made a momentous decision - though for him it was probably a straightforward one and in keeping with his philosophy - and refused the offer of a CBE which had been instigated by Hart-Davis and which was made in a letter from Downing Street on 10 May. The latter part of the year saw writing cast aside as he had to take responsibility for the house and garden because of an illness which required an extended stay in hospital for Mary. This coincided with his eighty-fifth birthday, which brought the now regular fuss and attention from his friends, admirers and the Press. At last he was able to write again and he began his long-awaited work on Arnold Bennett, although he was still unable to publish. Marguerite had died, but Dorothy Cheston Bennett was still alive. Other articles and book reviews were submitted and published, one in particular is worth notice for further revelations about himself. 'The Day I Grew Up'³² examines the fact that character never changes. He believes that experience and events simply 'illustrate its infinite resource'. He has always been cheerful, talkative and quick thinking. Age has simply brought him a sense of caution. The initiation into adult life is, for Swinnerton, the acceptance of responsibility for his own actions and the lives of other people. The moment this happened to him was during his near fatal illness in 1914, when as he lay, apparently dying, he realised that with Phil at war, no one would care for his mother if he were gone. As he rallied he accepted responsibility for her and grew up.

It was heartening to see that Swinnerton's works were still in demand. A new edition of *A Bookman's London* was due out in the Autumn. *The Georgian Literary Scene* was published in Hutchinson's Radius Books series and his first British paperback was issued with *Harvest Comedy*. His new title in 1969 was released on 24 February. *Reflections from a Village* is a unique work and does not fit into any of the other 'types' which came from Swinnerton's pen. It is a country book in which he indulges in his happiness and wants his reader to enjoy it. This is achieved by a series of short chapters which describe his arrival in Cranleigh, his conversion from a townsman to a countryman and his life and routine, which combine to create domestic bliss. The first section covers the early period of his residence in the 1920s, whilst the second concentrates on the Second World War and life in the 1960s. The chapters give his views on the garden, birds, spiders, cricket, cats, dogs, village characters and village life. A sense of extraordinary happiness and tranquillity permeates the pages and it is impossible not to take on Swinnerton's mood whilst reading this immensely enjoyable book. The reader learns more about his vision of life here than in his autobiography, although some of the events are recounted here, but in a more anecdotal form than had been appropriate in *Autobiography*. The depth of humour and delight in all living things can be recaptured with each reading without any loss of pleasure in the familiarity. This work reveals more about Swinnerton, the man, in its ambience as well as in its text, than any other. On page 147 he admits 'I am ... an extrovert, a person more interested in others than in myself. I have no sense of sin, no vain-glory, no troubled

consciousness of inferiority to others, and no wish to inflict any dogmatic creed upon the world'... Or on page 148 'I have never been a serious person; and have always released my effervescence in conversation, where it sometimes amuses before it bores'. The longest quotation belongs to his tribute of Mary:

My wife is an ideal companion for a man of my temperament ... a young woman without whims or vagaries ... she loves her home, is tender, loyal and miraculously unselfish. She has also considerable wit, which she says that I alone fully appreciate. She has been so unvariably kind a mother that she and our courageous and very attractive daughter have a beautiful mutual understanding; and, without sentimentality, she supports me in fortunately rare moments of discouragement. Her courtesy is superb: her social fault, excessive modesty.³³

The book attracted much critical attention on both sides of the Atlantic. After commenting on its contents, the most common words for the atmosphere are 'serene', 'peaceful', 'humorous', 'old-fashioned' and 'charming'. A good comment on Swinnerton's literary standing is indicated in Herbert Mitgang's review. 'What this memoir does explain is how a body of work ... was accumulated by a writer who is a professional but several cuts below greatness. There is neither anger here nor the eccentric eye of a Joyce Cary, for example, and both are vital. Happiness is a warm novelist but not always a lasting one'³⁴

Others bring out the essential qualities of the book. Many applaud this remarkable man, who they feel deserves a lasting

place in literature. These are clearly the converted. Writing for *The Sunday Times*, Swinnerton's neighbour, Maurice Wiggin, notes that Swinnerton's output is 'a remarkable achievement' and 'the keynote of his latest book is contentment. It is an enjoyable account of an enjoyable life'. He sees Swinnerton as a man who is invariably courteous and patient, reserved, quiet, contained, observant, optimistic, with a keen sense of the absurd and a firm control over his emotions.³⁵ The more critical, though accepting the book's readability and the gentle pleasure it will provide the reader, find the very sweetness and contentment too much to digest and give it an average mark for durability. Yet where excessive borrowing has not caused the book to be withdrawn through wear, it is still a well read item in British public libraries today. Swinnerton was popular with borrowers and his books were readily available for loan. One reader recalls 'They extended the horizons beyond my experience and I felt an empathy with the characters that I could understand and imagine their way of life'³⁶

Hutchinson reprinted the work a couple of times, but then allowed it to go out of print, much to the annoyance of the local bookseller in Cranleigh, who always had a steady market for it. Hamilton took up the option and reissued it, but unfortunately it made a loss and the Cranleigh bookshop was able to buy up the remainders and thus satisfy its customers.

Chapter 19

GRAND OLD MAN OF LETTERS

1970-1982

The year 1970 differed in no respects from those which had recently preceded it. A new novel, *Nor All Thy Tears* was commenced in February and occupied Swinnerton intermittently throughout the year. He also wrote several articles and book reviews and hugely enjoyed a visit to Sadlers Wells for a performance of *The Coronation of Poppaea*, which was a present from Olivia on the occasion of his forty-sixth wedding anniversary. On 18 July Olivia took them to Chichester to see *Arms and the Man* as a birthday treat for Mary. His own birthday brought the usual attention, which he clearly enjoyed. 'What more could anybody ask? I, certainly, wished for nothing', he wrote to his friend Katie Frost on 13 August. The only major event of the year was the publication of *On the Shady Side* in the UK and early in 1971 in the USA. This is another novel whose action takes place in the past. Grant Rutland, a middle-aged magistrate, unexpectedly becomes involved in the life of his elder brother, the writer Shaun Rutland after he has been found dead from an overdose of drugs and drink, and Grant endeavours to solve the mystery of Shaun's death. The device of using a journal is unoriginal, but, along with the opinions of the people who were involved with Shaun, it is the only way Swinnerton is able to unravel the plot. Grant takes on Shaun's ex-wife, Coralie Blythe, who imagines she has a claim on his estate; Charlie Benz, a speculator who took Shaun's money and was only able to bring in a profit after Shaun had died; and Rosemary Child, Shaun's young secretary, with whom the writer had

fallen in love, but was thwarted by Rosemary's invalid, tyrannical adoptive mother, who desired Shaun for herself. Grant delves into the past to endeavour to discover what lay behind the glamour and confidence of his brother's life. The novel reads like a mystery, a psychological one and Swinnerton 'penetrates to the true existence that dwells beneath the facade of the confident and successful appearance' and 'discovers the decay, the tawdriness, and the shams on the shady side of a career built on shifting sand, of a man outwardly confident and assured but inwardly fearful and tormented'.²

As the story unfolds another dimension is introduced with the growing attraction Grant experiences for Rosemary and it becomes clear at the end that he will offer her a future with him once she is freed from her mother. Swinnerton's love of court cases is shown, not for the first time, by court room scenes when Grant is at work. Indeed, Swinnerton took the trouble to consult a local solicitor about various aspects of inheritance and court procedure so that he could be certain the development of his plot would be accurate. This is a novel of very few characters and little action, which is fairly unimportant, as this gentle, reflective work concerns itself with psychology, the make-up of a person's character and the way this is enhanced or undermined by his actions. The best dialogue is the splendid scene in the denouement where Grant faces old Mrs Child and sets Rosemary free.

On the Shady Side is one of Swinnerton's better novels and many of the reviews recognised this, although it was clear the critics thought he was going out of fashion and out of date. It is:

the type of quiet, polite novel one would expect from a friend of Arnold Bennett and H G Wells, it piques the reader's curiosity just enough to keep him reading - but not so much that it'll keep him up too long past his regular bedtime. And it's a perfectly "safe" book you can give to your aunt from Iowa. There's not a scene in it which could possibly offend any reader³

Fortunately there were still many people who preferred the 'safe' to the outrageous and there was much critical applause for his achievement, especially giving consideration to his age, which seemed to concern the reviewers.

The early months of 1971 brought a postal strike resulting in many blank pages in Swinnerton's diary. His novel was completed on 23 May and Robert Lusty, over lunch on 3 June suggested the title, *Nor All Thy Tears*. As Swinnerton had now given up driving, his 1937 Rover was sold in September and he had now to rely on public transport and Olivia to get about. A new novel was commenced in July; several articles and good, solid intelligent book reviews, in which he concentrated on commenting on books about people he had known, such as Katherine Mansfield and Compton Mackenzie, were published. Articles about him as usual brought out his simplicity, modesty, charm, energy and sense of mischief. His old friend Myrtle died in December and so did Daisy Ashford in January 1972, which triggered off more requests for reminiscences from *The Times* and the BBC. Another interruption was the Post Office using Old Tokefield for a promotional film in 1972. Power cuts replaced the postal strike of the previous year to further inconvenience him as he continued his work on his penultimate novel, *Rosalind Passes*,

which he completed on 12 November. He attended his regular Foyle luncheon, this one in honour of Malcolm Muggeridge and his dinner companion proved to be Mary Whitehouse. He rounded off the year with a broadcast about Rose Macaulay. More reviews of new books showed his happy knack of not only making the review interesting, spiced as it was with his own recollections, but also being able to be critical without giving offence.

Nor All Thy Tears came out on 1 May 1972 and was successful to the point that a reprint was undertaken in December. Swinnerton changes scene once again and moves his new group of characters to an office environment in London to the premises of the Lapraik Press. Simon Hardcastle is the chief editor, some years off retirement, but well loved and respected for his exemplary qualities of stoicism, kindness and unswerving honesty. His secure world is jolted by the arrival of the young, hard-boiled, aggressive, yet insecure and immature new owner, Vera Lapraik. Affected by her unhappy upbringing this woman has no knowledge of the business, but allows her repressed sexual frustrations and lust for power to send her headlong into an impossible situation. This is achieved on one hand by badly mismanaging the staff, resulting in Simon being fired, and on the other becoming pregnant by her unscrupulous solicitor. It is left to Simon to rescue the situation and Vera. 'Frank Swinnerton was eighty-eight when he wrote this entertaining and deeply disturbing novel, keen in wit and in the penetration into human motives, and terrifying in its portrayal of the destructive force of uncontrolled ambition and power'.⁴

This is a very satisfying story in which goodness, wisdom and loyalty eventually triumph over folly. One never doubts that Simon can restore order. The reader has implicit faith in his integrity and ability. Although he is almost too perfect his fine qualities do not jar. They give the reader a sense of security instead. Swinnerton has avoided extraneous detail and philosophical or political dialogue, so that the reader is able to concentrate on and enjoy the events. It is a stylish and simply constructed work, almost a morality tale, similar in its message to that in *Sanctuary*. Swinnerton found it difficult to write, yet only serenity permeates the pages of this above average work.

On 30 November 1972 Compton Mackenzie died in his eighty-ninth year. Swinnerton had met him at Secker's office when he had stepped forward from among the book racks and introduced himself. They had enjoyed a friendly literary rivalry and in 1922 Mackenzie invited Swinnerton to visit him in Herm. Swinnerton enjoyed his company, regarding him as an expert mimic and 'one of the most diverting people alive'⁶. Their meetings often took the form of London lunches or occasional visits to Old Tokefield, even when they were both octogenarians. The basis of their friendship was their shared love of absurdity and gossip about their friends and contemporaries, but they were never close, as Swinnerton felt that Mackenzie possessed 'not so much a gift for friendship as "the power of establishing a ruthless intimacy of understanding"'⁶. Mackenzie and Secker were the last of Swinnerton's early literary friends to die. Secker died in 1978 in his nineties and blind. Mackenzie had told Swinnerton in the early 1940s 'I'm going to live until I'm 86 - you mustn't die before then. If you did, I

should have to write about you'?. It fell to Swinnerton to write his obituary.

Swinnerton's last novel was begun at the beginning of 1973 and he worked on it throughout the year. His world revolved increasingly round Old Tokefield, with few trips to London and his concerns were domestic ones. A new gardener, Mr Woodward was hired as Mr Elliot departed. Swinnerton had a cyst removed from his right eyelid on 28 March, but that removed from Mary's breast resulted in radiology treatment and she spent some time in hospital towards the end of the year. Olivia moved to a new flat in London as her old one had been sold to developers and her two cats joined the Swinnerton household. Yet Swinnerton's letters to his friends remained cheerful and complaint was noticeable by its absence.

Rosalind Passes was published in 1973 and spotlights the lives of the Maynards, the Reads and the Ryes. It is 1928. Clarissa and Henry Maynard's marriage is dying. She is a bored housewife, but is kind and introspective. Daphne Read, her good-humoured friend introduces her niece, Rosalind into this narrow world. Doris and George Rye are the parents of Cecil, who is wayward and uncontrollable. Rosalind becomes a regular visitor to the Maynards, has her portrait painted by the talented Clarissa and becomes attracted to Henry. Running parallel is the development of Cecil's life in completely different circumstances. Most of the action is seen through Clarissa's sensitive eyes, so we do not learn that Rosalind has died, apparently by her own hand, until she has disappeared from the scene for some time. Cecil, who is unknown to Clarissa has brought the news and it is the latter's

ability to recreate Cecil's features, which helps Inspector Chisholm to track her down and discover the truth of Rosalind's death. He uncovers Cecil's squalid lodgings where she lives with her husband Tempest, who it turns out has fallen in love with Rosalind and it is this that in the end has driven Cecil to poison her. Interwoven into this story is Clarissa's belief that Rosalind and Henry have had an affair and it takes a car accident at the end of the tale to convince her that this was not the case and that Henry is still precious to her. Thus Rosalind has passed through their lives and whilst she has given up her own through her involvement with the wrong people and her natural temperament, she has brought the Maynards' unsatisfactory relationship to a satisfactory conclusion.

Rouse was not happy about the awkwardness of the narrative structure and the constant movement between the various storylines.²⁰ Swinnerton's achievement in the novel is the soul-searching of Clarissa, the development of her thoughts and consciousness and the reawakening love for her husband. Swinnerton feels comfortable with the period of the work, far more than with novels set in the present day. It is well crafted, if a little contrived towards the end, when events must be created to achieve the desired denouement. He has used the device of introducing an outsider to shake up the conceptions and perceptions of the main characters before, notably in *A Month in Gordon Square*, but it is an interesting idea and works well here. The psychological angle does not sit too comfortably with the dramatic action. Yet although there are undoubtedly weaknesses in both its conception and presentation, the novel's essential success in its treatment

of Clarissa's emotional development tips the balance towards the creation of a satisfactory work.

The outstanding event of 1974 was Swinnerton's ninetieth birthday. The occasion began on 30 July when Hallam Tennyson interviewed him for a BBC broadcast, which was heard on the Third Programme on 10 August under the title 'Swinerton at 90'. *The Listener* commented on it on 29 August and it is interesting that Swinnerton said he still felt seventeen and when asked about his pragmatic approach to life, he said that his cheerful disposition taught him that the only way to face life was to meet it head on with equanimity. On 8 August Kay Evans from *Woman's Hour* recorded a programme and a third visitor at the gate was Roy Plomley. Swinnerton protested that he had already been wrecked on a desert island, 'but he brushed the protest aside, saying that everyone but himself had forgotten it'.⁹ Swinnerton's second Desert Island Discs was heard on 21 September and Swinnerton, Mary and Olivia listened to it together at Old Tokefield. Among his musical items this time were an old favourite, *A Little of What you Fancy Does You Good* (Marie Lloyd), Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pineapple Poll*, Beethoven's *Pastoral* (in his opinion the greatest work ever written), Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Bizet's *Au fond du temple saint*, and Rossini's *William Tell Overture*. His luxury would be a cat, but he would settle for a gin and vermouth and his book, James Woodforde's *The Diary of a Country Parson*. Birthday cards were already arriving three days before the event. There were wires and telegrams, another journalist, Janet Watts, turned up from *The Guardian* and a multitude of visitors left him too tired to work. Hutchinson took out an advertisement in *The*

Times Literary Supplement which wished him a happy ninetieth birthday and for a whole week afterwards Swinnerton could be found replying to his well-wishers

His last novel was still being written two years after it had been begun, and some book reviews made up the sum of his literary output. It was 20 January 1975 before he finally put down his pen. His relaxation then was to pick up a Ngaio Marsh mystery and do some light chores in the garden. He wrote a preface to Bennett's *Clayhanger* trilogy and an article for a Cranleigh booklet. On 7 June a dramatised version of *Nocturne* was performed on the radio. He was informed in August that his novel *Not in Our Stars* could not be published by Hutchinson for a year and this meant that Swinnerton would not receive his advance. He needed the money and when he told Jamie Hamilton of his dilemma, the latter immediately offered to take it. The title was changed to *Some Achieve Greatness* and the incident was reported in the press. At the age of ninety, after fifty years, some of them unsatisfactory, with Hutchinson and fifty-two books, Swinnerton had finally broken free. Winston Graham commended the move. 'I've always said ... that he [Hamilton] has the best small list in the country. Now it will carry another distinguished name'.

The end of the year was marred by further illness for Mary. She had been unwell all year and now had a blood clot. A further operation and x-rays were followed by a protracted stay in hospital. Olivia and Swinnerton's niece, Helen Rose, came down regularly during the first four months of 1976 to visit Mary and to ensure Swinnerton's needs were met. Much of his diary is blank now and most entries note chores, visitors and a comment on 18

December which records a wonderful offer by Stewart Richardson, editor-in-chief at Doubleday for paperback rights for five novels. Several articles were written about Swinnerton's life at 92. Herbert Mitgang of *The Times*¹ interviewed him on the occasion of the publication of *Some Achieve Greatness* in the USA. He makes much of Swinnerton being the oldest novelist of the English-speaking world, and most likely the only one to have celebrated his golden wedding. A glimpse into his daily routine is offered with a comment that he walks into the village every morning to do the family shopping, which takes a long time because he stops and talks to every local in his path. He also takes credit for the publication of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* in the UK as he had recommended it to Chatto & Windus. At this time in 1976 he was working on three books: *Old Man With Three Daughters* was to be his next novel; *Share My Delight* was to be a book of literary appreciations, which would consist of a collection of the introductions which he had written; and finally he was composing his tribute to Arnold Bennett, Swinnerton's long awaited biography. The reporter for the *West Surrey County Times*² was impressed by his lively mind and conversation. Swinnerton commented that two of his old friends still survived. These were Martin Secker, who was now ninety-four and a woman he had known since childhood, probably Katie Frost, who lived in Worthing. His reading is now very selective and entirely for pleasure. Predictably this is Jane Austen, Hazlitt's *Conversations with Northcote* and Woodforde's *Diary of a Country Parson*. His outdoor enjoyment is clipping his hedges, although this is now very hard for him and he still works in his studio every morning and

afternoon, with a long nap in between. In Yeritza Sharp's article¹³ we learn that he has become disenchanted with present day Cranleigh which is now more of a dormitory town than a village and that he remained the president of the Cranleigh Cricket Club until Peter May came to live in the district and Swinnerton felt that he would be a more appropriate president.

Some Achieve Greatness was published on 15 April 1976, which he celebrated with a lunch in London in the company of Jamie Hamilton. It sold so well that Hamilton informed Swinnerton on 29 May that over £1000 in royalties had already been earned. In a comfortable cottage in the Berkshire village of Slocumbe lives Florence Marvell, a contented middle-aged spinster who has found some fame as a book illustrator. Her peace is shattered when Sir Roderick Patterson moves into the local manor house with his wife Evelyn and their children Sandra and Saul. Against her will, Florence is drawn into their lives when she involves herself with the problems of Sandra, who is experiencing marital discord, Saul, who has embroiled himself in shady dealings in London, and Roderick's brother, Syd, who is tried for manslaughter and is also in the process of publishing a book which would cause embarrassment to Roderick's political aspirations. Florence in her role of 'white witch' - as one review styles her - succeeds in reconciling Sandra with her husband, persuading Saul to confide his financial problems to his father and manages to persuade her publishers, who have taken the option on Syd's book, not to publish it. The sting is the revelation that Florence and Roderick had once been in love, but he had left her to pursue his ambitions

and a better political match in Evelyn. Yet Florence is able to put aside this memory as she helps his family.

The story appears to be set in the present day, a rarity in Swinnerton's later novels. He retains the old fashioned chapter structure, with the book divided into parts, short chapters with headings. Some of the ideas in which Swinnerton is particularly interested surface again here: another look at the repercussions of divorce; a court scene seen from the point of view of the barrister; the belief that gentleness, simplicity, honesty and a sense of giving will always triumph in a world full of pretensions and aspirations. It is a sweet and sentimental book, unrealistic, but still satisfying to read. In the end though the whole episode has been a mere interlude, showing that despite his aspirations Roderick will never achieve the greatness he has coveted.

The reviews were generally good and emphasised Swinnerton's humanity and tolerance and appreciated the quality of the work, 'from faultless plotting to exactly judged characterisation'¹⁴. However, 'in 1926 this book would have been outstanding among its kind; in this era of looser structures and less definitive statements the very exactness of its expert tooling sets up creaking stresses'.¹⁵ *The Times* makes much of the old time gentleness of both the novel and the writer and although out of step with modern tastes, it 'reads unmistakably as the book of a happy and fulfilled man. It is not a masterpiece; it is that rare thing, a thoroughly agreeable novel'.¹⁶ Jill Neville of *The Sunday Times* considers 'the least serious and most entertaining novel of the week is the best Frank Swinnerton I have ever read. ... At 92 years of age Frank Swinnerton has written a comedy that bounds

with coltish energy and cunningly administered wisdom'.¹⁷ Hart-Davis considered it an 'outstanding' novel. 'I rejoice in your lucid prose, brilliant characterisation and exciting narrative'¹⁸. Swinnerton received an advance of £1250 with 12½% on the first 3000 copies sold and 15% thereafter.

The death of Dorothy Cheston Bennett in February 1977 saw the removal of the last obstacle to Swinnerton's biography of Arnold Bennett. He had already begun to write this appreciation, but now he could work on it in earnest and Hamilton was soon pressing him for an early completion. In fact it took him just four months of steady writing to complete and it was published on 16 March 1978. For many years Swinnerton had wanted to put the record straight about his much maligned friend. He always maintained that Bennett had been misunderstood, that his facade had fooled people so that they were unable to see the kind, gentle, affectionate man who lurked underneath. Swinnerton believed that Bennett's failure had been in his choice of women and he is scathing about the characters of both Marguerite, Bennett's legal wife, and Dorothy Cheston, his common-law wife. It is a short work of about 120 pages, but in it Swinnerton brings to life a figure who is better known either as a great author or a vulgar provincial fascinated by wealth, depending on the point of view. Here we see Bennett the loyal friend as perceived by a man of intuition and honesty, but nevertheless coloured by a great affection and the need to answer uninformed criticism. This is not so much the real Bennett as a facet of him seen only behind closed doors by the chosen few.

Unsurprisingly there was a whole rush of reviews for this final published work of Swinnerton's. There was so much new

material and provoking opinion in the content that it is understandable the reviewers should have so much on which to comment. The content of the reviews has little to say about Swinnerton or his style on this occasion. The consensus was that Swinnerton had produced an answer to the biographers who had never known Bennett, to both Marguerite and Dorothy's memoirs which were unsatisfactory and partisan, and to Bennett's own journals and letters. The reviews concluded that Bennett was hounded to an early death by two strong-willed, insensitive, grasping and shrewish women.

Of his style Anthony Burgess¹⁹ comments 'Mr Swinnerton writes very winningly. He fears, like all old men, that he may be repeating himself, but his narrative shows no tendency to wander in circles. It is crisp, always ready with the *mot juste*, and it is crammed with sharp visual images'. Yet Francis King²⁰ states 'There are, it is true, times when he repeats himself or indulges in some wayward digression - an unedifying passage about the Bloomsbury Group is a case in point; but writers a third his age often do the same'. Robert Lusty exposes his affection for Swinnerton in his review for *Books and Bookmen*²¹ when he designates him a 'Living Treasure' and spends time examining the author and his credentials to write such a book on Bennett before he proceeds to the work itself. Swinnerton received a £1000 advance with 12% on the first 3000 copies sold and 15% thereafter. It was remaindered in 1980 when 1294 copies were sold at 60p each.

Swinnerton was pleased with the book's reception both by the critics and by the public, several of whom wrote enthusiastic letters to him. But other things were concerning him during 1978.

Mary was still ill and a nurse had been calling daily to attend her. Also he was so worried about his tax demands that he employed Mr Edgington of Oakwood Hill, Surrey to handle them. His only contact with the published word at this time was the various articles which still appeared about him in both local and national newspapers. Michael Geare of *The Bookseller* and Carolyn Sloan, a freelance journalist, remember him with deep affection. She loved his old world courtesy, his cheerful and happy manner, the Swinnertons' hospitality, which involved cucumber sandwiches and little napkins, Mary's companion^{on}able silence, and Swinnerton's enjoyment at being interviewed because it gave him the opportunity to reminisce freely to an interested party. He was sad that the only books he was now asked to review were Victorian ones, suitable for such a Victorian as he. Swinnerton's niece, Helen Willans, also remembers the sandwiches, only hers were beetox and cress, home-made jam, sponges and chocolate cake. He became unsteady with age and would often fall, usually having tripped up on one of the cats. Helen knew him as a modest, charming, honest, courteous and confident man, who did not like unpleasantness, was easily embarrassed and disliked casual callers at the cottage. She remembers his daily routine in terms of meal times and the food which was presented. His love of music had been nurtured in childhood when he and Philip started a music society called *The Arcadians* and towards the end of this life Olivia would bring him new recordings of operas every week.

During 1979 Swinnerton worked on his novel *Old Man with Three Daughters*. He had received a £1250 advance for this 90,000 word work and it was expected by Hamilton in March 1980. The

inspiration for it had come from his favourite painting, a copy of a Pissarro rustic scene, which hung in the dining room. It was to be 'about an old sculptor who is a vigorous and aggressive man and whose daughters are a bit of a handful'.²² But age and events overtook him and only a fragment of about 3000 words was completed. This describes how Robert Harper stumbles upon an intriguing house hidden away behind an unkempt garden as he is returning home from Worcester to London. We learn that he is an artist and has a sophisticated older brother. We assume that the house belongs to the old man and his daughters and that Harper will intrude into their lives.

Mary had been his support since before they were married in 1924. She had never gone out to work, but had run the home with efficiency, tenderness and humour. She supervised the staff and when they left she proved herself to be an excellent cook and good housekeeper. Though she did not have a wide circle of friends of her own, she would often go out to tea with friendly neighbours and enjoyed visits to the cinema. Whilst Swinnerton worked she would ensure that everything would be in order for when he came indoors to relax. She was thirteen years younger than Swinnerton and yet she died first, of secondary cancer, on 16 April 1980 and was cremated in Guildford on 23 April. She had been unwell for four years. After having a fall in 1976, complications had set in and movement became a problem. Swinnerton, at ninety-five, found it a tremendous strain coping with the last months and the pressures distressed him very much. Writing to a friend, Harold Albert, Swinnerton stated, 'I must tell you that my wife died last year. She had lived as long as she could live, and I miss her

every day'.²³ To another friend, Roger Till, he expanded 'My beloved wife, after months of illness, died last April in the Village Hospital here. We had been married for 56 happy years, and I am still only half-alive in her absence. Everybody has been exceedingly kind; but every day I see or think of something that I feel she would enjoy. Fortunately, although a stroke robbed her of her speech, she was in no pain; only the grief of leaving me'.²⁴

Swinnerton wrote one more article, for the *Daily Telegraph* on 13 June 1981, in which, on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the launch of Everyman's Library, he remembers in some detail the preparations, excitements and problems related to the compilation of this series. He lived on for sixteen more months, becoming increasingly frail and still reeling from the tremendous blow of Mary's death. Even in his last months, he allowed Michael Geare to interview him. Geare found him smoking a pipe in his favourite armchair, awaiting the daily call from Olivia at 10 am. Although he rambled a little, he was extremely lucid, remembered clearly people and events and never once faltered. Olivia came down every weekend, worked in the garden and prepared his meals for him before she left for work. Swinnerton had never wanted to live to be 100. He had no desire for a telegram from the Queen. He got his wish when he was admitted to the village hospital, where he could be found giving lectures on Charlotte Brontë to fellow patients days before his death. This occurred peacefully and suddenly on 6 November 1982 and he was cremated at Guildford Crematorium. Obituaries appeared in the major dailies and book world journals, all of them paying tribute to this singular man. David Williams wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*²⁵ 'As an imaginative writer

Swinerton commanded both subtlety, fluency and narrative urgency'. His literary criticism would be valuable to future researchers of the literary scene of which he was part. Williams cites the influence of George Gissing and Arnold Bennett as Swinerton's weakness, but allows that 'he was a shrewd, even-tempered man with a vast acquaintance, but his private life was very private'.

Michael Geare writing in *The Bookseller*²⁶ spoke of him as a 'remarkable and marvellous survivor, and a significant figure in the literature of the first half of this century'. Even his last work was of a high standard: *Arnold Bennett: A Last Word* was 'spare, deft and a delight to read'. The writer in *The Times* obituary, felt that some of Swinerton's novels would last. 'His style was natural and lucid, not apparently heavily wrought or loaded with subtleties of implication'.²⁷ He believed that Swinerton's early work gave good examples of what life was really like amongst the young of a certain class in the London of the early twentieth century. He rejected the Gissing/Bennett claim and correctly stated that Swinerton's real influences were Louisa May Alcott, Henrik Ibsen and Henry James, all of whom were strong on female psychology, which was also Swinerton's own great strength. Swinerton merited a page in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and it was Robert Lusty who wrote the outline of his life covering all the salient points of Swinerton's achievements and actions and adding 'Swinerton was, above all, a great bookman. He cared deeply for writing and writers. He was the most trusted of men and of a lovable and generous nature. He never faltered for an apt word, a name, or a revealing anecdote'.

In Benny Green's tribute in 1983²⁸, Swinnerton's ability to read literary trends is praised. 'Swinnerton was the most astute of literary stockbrokers, a novelist shrewdly skilled in quoting the current market prices of other novelists'. Green notes that Swinnerton was unconcerned that his novels were ephemeral and had no expectations of being remembered. Yet Green expects *The Georgian Literary Scene, Figures in the Foreground and Background with Chorus* to remain critical masterpieces and feels that Swinnerton had learnt the lessons of reality and had no sacred cows. O F Snelling in 1984²⁹ goes even further and bemoans the lack of recognition for this man who 'never quite caught on among his own countrymen' and contends that this approachable, readable, sociable man, with his immense staying power, should secure a prominent place in literary history especially with his critical works.

'I hope that I shall die without giving trouble much to anybody, that I shall be cremated, that I shall be forgotten. A few words may be printed in the newspapers, probably saying how many books I wrote; and then there will be silence'. Thus wrote Swinnerton in *Reflections from a Village*. There is, however, no question of him being entirely forgotten. His novels in retrospect will remain as interesting examples of both a literary era gone by and a social history of early twentieth century London. His talent was not a great one, but was enough to make a satisfactory living from the pen. He led too secluded a life to become involved in its excesses, which are often breeding grounds for unusual and original ideas. He was temperamentally so well-balanced and contented that he rarely experienced the great pain and suffering

from which inspiration for classic prose and depth of feeling can often spring.

However, he deserves his place in literature as an astute recorder and critical analyst of the trends and people, which belonged to this very crowded period of English and American literature, and of which he was himself so intimately a part. He was the supreme bookman and he cared passionately for all aspects of the written word. His temperament and his long life made him an ideal observer and he has left behind a unique collection of materials which give a multi-faceted and complete view of what literature signified to the men and women of the Georgian era.

NOTES

Chapter 2

YOUTH

1. The church was near what is now the Barbican and was destroyed by bombing during the Second World War.
2. Desert Island Discs, 21 September 1974 (on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday).
3. Frank Swinnerton, *Swinnerton: An Autobiography* (London, 1937) p. 49.
4. In later years he became very fussy with his punctuation and would become annoyed if a reader changed it in any way. In a letter to F J Martin Dent concerning the proofs to The Memorial Lecture he wrote: 'By the way, will you please persuade your reader to leave the punctuation as it appears in the typescript? Though I have a great respect for him I have great obstinacy and consider myself a dab at punctuating my own work'. 13 November 1939.
5. The two main periodicals were *Scottish Cyclist*, which was allied to *Scottish Sport*; and *Saint Andrew*, which was a not too successful religious weekly.

Chapter 3

THE DENT YEARS 1901 - 1907

1. Indeed Rhys in his autobiography recounts a conversation with J M Dent, who believed that since his involvement in publishing was for the benefit of mankind, that authors should not expect to get paid. 'You writers enjoy your writing, and do not need to be paid, but I sit grinding away all day with

all the trouble and none of the pleasure!' Ernest Rhys, *Wales England Wed* (London, 1940), p. 166.

2. The interview was given to Michael Geare of *The Bookseller* in July 1982. It is kept on tape.
3. This was the Everyman edition of *Essays of Elia*. He had been dissatisfied with the type page.
4. This anecdote is recounted in Swinnerton's *Autobiography*, pp. 92/93.
5. Rhys, *Wales England Wed*, p. 166.
6. *ibid*, p. 166.
7. These were: Poetry, Romance, Theology, Fiction, Children's Classics, History, Essays, Science, Biography, Reference, Classical, Travel and Oratory.
8. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, De Quincey's *Reminiscences of the Lake Poets*, and Froude's *Essays in Literature and History*.

Chapter 4

THE CHATTO YEARS 1907 - 1910

1. Hytch had been introduced by Hotten and although never a partner, he had always been a senior member of the firm.
2. He left in 1911 and died 2 years later.
3. To bring together all the dwellings, here is a list up to the time Swinnerton left home:

Bradford House, Pellatt Grove, Wood Green 1884

Paris 1885 - 1890

150 Farringdon Road 1890

Cavendish Buildings, Clerkenwell

150 Farringdon Road (a second time)

Hornsby Road, Holloway 1895

Holloway Road

Finsbury Park

East Finchley 1897

East Finchley (second address)

Southwood Lane, Highgate Village 1900

Upper Holloway

West Hampstead

4 Great James Street 1906

9 Victoria Gardens, Archway Road, Highgate 1910

16 Woodland Rise, Muswell Hill Road, N 1912

33 Ravenscroft Park, Barnet 1918

4. Frank Swinnerton, *Arnold Bennett: A Last Word* (London, 1978)

p. 10

5. *Bookman*, vol. 53, no. 318 (1918), p. 175.

6. Professor Blair Rouse wrote an unpublished manuscript, *Frank Swinnerton: Man of Letters*. The first section gave a short narrative of Swinnerton's life. The second concentrated on his achievement as a literary critic and historian. The third gave a brief resumé of each novel, and the final section examined his achievement as a creative artist and his reputation as a novelist and critic. Rouse met and talked with Swinnerton at the Reform Club in 1961, 1963 and 1970 and visited Old Tokefield in 1963.
7. Rouse manuscript, p. 10.

Chapter 5

THE CHATTO YEARS 1910 - 1913

1. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, pp. 137-138.
2. Swinnerton, *Arnold Bennett*, p. 10. In an article written in 1917 to promote the publication of *Nocturne* in the USA Bennett recalled the event, but believed it was *The Casement* which had been sent to him, but this is chronologically impossible.
3. Swinnerton's ancestry on his father's side was from Staffordshire. Bennett would have made the connection because he would have known of the existence of the village of Swynnerton in the county. To Bennett their common origin was a link.
4. Swinnerton, *Arnold Bennett*, p. 11.
5. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, p. 140.
6. *ibid*, p. 141.
7. Reginald B Johnson, *Some Contemporary Novelists (Men)* (London, 1922), p. 209.
8. As a postscript, in a letter to Jonathan Cape on 2 April 1950 it is clear that the Swinnertons had kept in touch with Ada. He wrote: 'The Cundalls have moved to Kent: near Ashford. Mrs Cundall types my novels for me as a kind act'.
9. Swinnerton noted them in his diary. They were: *Manchester Guardian*, *Evening Standard*, *Scotsman*, *English Review*, *Morning Post*, *Truth*, *Guardian*, *Bookman*, *Globe*, *Daily Mail*, *Church Times* and *Chronicle*.
10. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, p. 138.
11. Arnold Bennett and others, *Frank Swinnerton: Critical Appreciations* (New York, [1926]), p. 8. The Bennett article

was written in 1917.

12. Desert Island Discs, 21 September 1974.
13. Swinnerton, *George Gissing: A Critical Study* (London, 1912), p. 126. Also given here is Swinnerton's own view what a successful short story should be.
14. *ibid.* p. 138.
15. Swinnerton lists *The Times*, *Birmingham Post*, *Church Times*, *Daily Mail*, *Chronicle*, *Scotsman*, *Observer*, *English Review*, *Westminster Gazette*, *Sunday Times*, *Daily News*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Spectator*, *Evening Standard*, and *New York Times* in his diary.
16. H G Wells, *Experiments in Autobiography*, vol. 2 (London, 1966), p. 567.
17. *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 April 1968, pp. 423-424.
18. Frederick John Hoffman, *The Little Magazines: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton Univ., 1946), p. 243.

Chapter 6

THE CHATTO YEARS 1914 - 1917

1. Frank Swinnerton, *On the Staircase* (London, 1914), p. 208.
2. *The Times*, 7 March 1914.
3. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, Good Friday, 1915.
4. *Scotsman*, 9 March 1914.
5. *Globe*, 7 March 1914.
6. 'Mr Swinnerton ... and his Novels', *New York Times*, 2 December 1923, lead article in book section.
7. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, p. 172.
8. He contributed from January to 2 September 1914, when it

folded.

9. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, pp. 171-172.
10. Arnold Bennett, *Arnold Bennett: The Evening Standard Years: Books and Persons 1926-1931* (London, 1974), pp. 62 and 164.
11. These were *The Bottle Imp*, *Thrawn Janet*, *The Treasure of Franchard*, *Providence and the Guitar* and *The Beach of Falesa*.
12. P P Howe, *Life of William Hazlitt* (London, 1922), introduction, p. xi.
13. Johnson, *Some Contemporary Novelists*, p. 217.
14. *Bookman*, vol. 53, no. 318 (1918), 175/176.
15. Bennett, *Critical Appreciations*, p. 9.
16. Into Dutch, Swedish, French, Italian, Czech and Russian.
17. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 12 July 1917.
18. Bennett, *Critical Appreciations*, p. 10.
19. *ibid*, p. 18.
20. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, p. 225.

Chapter 7

THE CHATTO YEARS: 1918 - 1919

1. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, p. 275.
2. Other reviews were published in *Daily News* (11 October), *Daily Graphic* (11 October), *Westminster* (12 October), *Sunday Times* (13 October), *Weekly Despatch* (20 October), *Land and Water* (24 October), *Manchester Guardian* (25 October), *Bookman* (8 November).
3. Stuart Mais, *Books and their Writers* (London, 1920), p. 36.
4. Review published 10 October 1918. Reissued as a chapter in her work *Contemporary Writers* (London, 1965), pp. 99-101.

5. *ibid*, p. 99.
6. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 10 May 1918.
7. Letter, Arnold Bennett to Swinnerton, 21 October 1918.
8. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, p. 286.
9. Swinnerton, *Women* (London, 1918), p. 37.
10. *ibid*, pp. 113, 116 and 118.
11. Swinnerton, *Figures in the Foreground* (London, 1963), p. 52.
12. Swinnerton, *Arnold Bennett*, p. 38.
13. Bennett, *Critical Appreciations*, pp. 10/11.
14. Swinnerton diary entry for 25 June 1919.
15. It eventually sold 5000 copies in the UK and 17,000 in the USA.
16. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 3 November 1919.
17. Letter, Arnold Bennett to Swinnerton, 28 September 1919.
18. Mackenzie's *Poor Relations* was published on the same day.
19. *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 September 1919.
20. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 10 September 1919.
21. Review published 25 September 1919 and reissued as a chapter in her work *Contemporary Writers*, p. 103.
22. *ibid*, pp. 103/4.

Chapter 8

THE CHATTO YEARS 1920 - 1923

1. Letter, Arnold Bennett to Marguerite Bennett, 6 April 1921.
In this letter he commented that Dorothea was a friend of Swinnerton's.
2. During the year Swinnerton spent eight weekends there: from 17/1, 14/3, 21/5, 5/6, 10/7, 21/8, 25/9 and 10/6.

3. These were 16/4, 16/8 and 27/11.
4. He visited Wells on eight occasions: 8/1, 15/1, 5/2, 24/3, 3/6, 15/7, 30/7 and 15/10.
5. A measure of his increasing wealth can be seen by his tax returns. For 1918: £374 8s 0d; 1919: £581; 1920: £710 8s 2d; 1921: £1004 1s 7d.
6. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 3 January 1921.
7. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 21 February 1921.
8. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 29 August 1921.
9. Johnson, *Some Contemporary Novelists*, pp. 218 and 219.
10. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 31 August 1921.
11. The weekends of 8/2, 14/4, 4/6, 16/6, 5-14/8 and 11/11.
12. Grant Overton, 'Some Particulars', in Bennett, *Critical Appreciations*, p. 33.
13. Letter, Arnold Bennett to Swinnerton, 1 February 1923.
14. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 15 October 1922.
15. Overton, 'Some Particulars', p. 33.
16. *Manchester Guardian*, 12 October 1923.

Chapter 9

THE TWO WIVES

1. Miles was the author of *Christmas in Ritual and Tradition*. He had an extensive knowledge of European languages and an interest in ethics and sociology. He translated Sabatier's *Modernism* from French and co-translated Gayda's *Modern Austria: the Racial and Social Problems*, from the Italian. He was on the literary staff of T. Fisher & Unwin and died aged thirty-seven on 7 February 1918.

2. Chatto & Windus papers at Reading University. The letter was dated 21 December 1916 and was written to Richard Cobden-Sanderson.
3. Reader's report for Chatto & Windus by Swinnerton, no. 27158, held in Chatto archives at Reading University.
4. Swinnerton diary entry for 16 March 1918.
5. Kelly's street directories at Ealing library show that Mrs Dircks was the head of the household and so one has to assume that the home belonged to her and that her son William Henry and granddaughter, Helen, were living with her.
6. Swinnerton diary entry for 1 July 1918.
7. *ibid*, 20 July 1918 and 23 July 1918.
8. *ibid*, 18 August 1918.
9. Letter, Swinnerton to Lieutenant Colonel Ian Swinnerton of the Swinnerton Society regarding his ancestry, 6 August 1976.
10. Swinnerton diary entry for 9 May 1919. Knob was his usual nickname for her as she wore her hair in a bun.
11. Three theatre outings occurred in 1920: 6 January, 20 March and 10 August.
12. Arnold Bennett, *Letters to his Nephew* (London, 1936), pp. 32, 33 and 34.
13. Letter, Swinnerton to Lt. Col. Swinnerton, 6 August 1976.
14. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 22 September 1920.
15. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 29 September 1920.
16. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 12 May 1921.
17. Letter, Swinnerton to Mary Bennett, 10 February 1922.
18. Letter, Swinnerton to Mary Bennett, 6 May 1922.
19. Sentiments expressed in letters from Swinnerton to Mary

Bennett, 6 February 1923 and 15 February 1923.

20. His London flat.
21. Domestic staff at Old Tokefield, Cranleigh.
22. One can speculate about Swinnerton's feelings about divorces from the only comment he makes on divorce courts in all his novels. In *The Grace Divorce* (1960) two of the character are talking about contentment: "'I'm content" he solemnly remarked. "Or, as Divorce court judges say: "I'm satisfied". I don't know why they should be satisfied. They know the cases have all been cooked. Personally, I'm never satisfied that justice has been done in any court".'
23. Swinnerton, *Arnold Bennett*, p. 45.
24. He had been enrolled as a temporary member of the Players Club, the Union League, Princeton, Yale and Century Clubs.
25. Letter, Swinnerton to Mary Bennett, 3 December 1923.
26. Anon article in Dallas newspaper c. 1 February 1924.
27. Handbill for first public lecture in New York Town Hall, 2 December 1923.
28. Letter, Swinnerton to Mary Bennett, 11 December 1923.
29. *Young Felix* sold 16,000 copies by the end of 1923 on the back of his tour.
30. Letter, Swinnerton to Mary Bennett, 15 February 1924.

Chapter 10

THE CHATTO YEAR 1924 - 1925

1. Floyd Dell, 'Frank Swinnerton at Home', in Bennett, *Critical Appreciations*, p. 13.
2. There is no longer a railway running through Cranleigh.

3. From an untitled, undated local broadsheet/magazine, possibly Crane, the publication of the Glebeland School, Cranleigh, May 1969.
4. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 1 June 1923.
5. Swinnerton, *Arnold Bennett*, p. 45.
6. Letter, Arnold Bennett to his nephew, 25 May 1923.
7. Swinnerton was aware of Bennett's opinion, but he refuted the charge and considered he had bought it at a fair price.
8. For 1924 he wrote sixteen articles or reviews. These were:
 - 'Romance'.
 - 'What I Demand from Life'.
 - 'Ten Most Interesting People'.
 - Review: D H Lawrence's *Boy in the Bush*, for *Manchester Guardian*.
 - 'Carmichaels'. Short story.
 - Review: G B Stern's *Tents of Israel*', for *Manchester Guardian*.
 - 'Respectability'.
 - 'Feeling Inferior'.
 - 'The Celebrity'. Short story.
 - 'Advice', for *Good Housekeeping*.
 - 'The Lie'. Short story.
 - 'The Marriage Arranged'. Short story.
 - Review of Cabell's *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck*, for *Manchester Guardian*.
 - Review of Stephens's *In the Hand of Youth*, for *Manchester Guardian*.
 - Review of Ward's *The Short Story*, for *Manchester Guardian*.
 - Review of Mackenzie's *Old Man of the Sea*, for *Manchester*

Guardian.

9. These were:

'Being Pleased with Oneself'.

'On Giving Way to Things'.

'Minding One's Own'.

'In the Fog'. Short story.

'The Guest'. Short story, for *Good Housekeeping*.

Review of *The Informer*, for *Manchester Guardian*.

'Marriage in the Future'.

10. *Daily Express*, 1 October 1925.

11. Rouse manuscript, p. 117.

12. *Saturday Review of Literature*, 13 February 1926.

13. *New York Times Book Review*, 8 November 1925.

14. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 22 September 1925.

15. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 25 September 1925.

16. 60% of his income came in from US sales via Pinker.

17. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 30 April 1926.

Chapter 11

FREELANCE YEARS 1926 - 1932

1. Louise Morgan, 'Frank Swinnerton on the Future of the Novel',
Everyman, 5 February 1931, p. 43.

2. *ibid*, p. 41.

3. *ibid*, p. 41.

4. see comment made to Martin Dent in a letter, 13 November 1939,
note 4 to chapter 2.

5. Letter, Swinnerton to Chatto [Charles Prentice?], 27 March
1927.

6. *ibid.*
7. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, pp. 402-405.
8. *Writer*, no. 1 (October 1925), p. 2.
9. Annie Russell Marble, *A Study of the Modern Novel* (London, 1928) p. 144.
10. *ibid.*, p. 34.
11. *London Bookman*, vol. 75, no. 446 (1928), 114.
12. Lloyd Morris, *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 December 1926.
13. Gerard de Catalogne, newspaper unknown, 28 July 1928.
14. Lloyd Morris, *op cit.*
15. *New York Post Literary Review*, 3 April 1926.
16. 'Summer Storm and Mr Swinnerton', in Bennett, *Critical Appreciations*, p. 35.
17. *ibid.*, p. 37.
18. Rouse manuscript, p. 118.
19. *Evening Standard*, 4 November 1926.
20. *Boston Evening Transcript*, 11 December 1926.
21. Letter, Allan Monkhouse to Swinnerton, 3 May 1927.
22. Letter, Mary Swinnerton to Mrs Bennett, 1 October 1926.
23. See Walpole chapter.
24. Letter, Mary Swinnerton to Mrs Bennett, 8 October 1926.
25. Swinnerton diary entry for 16 November 1926.
26. *Glasgow Evening News*, 15 December 1927.
27. *Evening Standard*, 8 December 1927.
28. *Manchester Guardian*, 15 November 1927.
29. Swinnerton, *A London Bookman* (London, 1928), p. 220.
30. *ibid.*, p. 88.
31. *ibid.*, p. 74.

32. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 10 November 1928.
33. *ibid.*
34. 'Swinerton at 90' broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 18 August 1974.
35. *New York Times*, 20 October 1929.
36. 'Frank Swinerton in Vienna', *Vienna Herald*, 16 September 1932, p. 1.
37. Letter, Mary Swinerton to Mrs Bennett, 18 September 1932.
38. Swinerton diary entry for 20 September 1932.
39. *Booklover*, series 4, no. 9 (1932). Swinerton writing.
40. James Douglas, *Daily Express*, 7 August 1932.
41. *The Star*, 5 August 1932.
42. *News Chronicle*, 20 May 1932.
43. Colin Still, unnamed newspaper article, 1932.
44. Johnson, *Some Contemporary Novelists*, pp. 219/220.
45. Belbin, *Gentle Realist*, p. 2.
46. Appeared in *Ladies Home Journal* (October 1924).
47. Appeared in *Woman's Home Companion*, no. 54 (July 1927).
48. Appeared in *Delineator* (February 1928).
49. Appeared in *Story Teller* (May 1926).
50. Appeared in *Century Magazine* (August 1927).
51. Appeared in *Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1927).
52. Appeared in *Delineator* ([1927]).
53. Appeared in *Delineator* (Early 1927).
54. Appeared in *Colliers* (16 March 1929).
55. Appeared in *Saturday Evening Post*, 4 April 1925.
56. Appeared in *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 14 June 1925.

Chapter 12

ARNOLD BENNETT

1. Swinnerton, *Arnold Bennett*, p. 14.
2. *ibid*, p. 17.
3. *ibid*, p. 31.
4. *ibid*, p. 36.
5. Frank Swinnerton, *The Georgian Literary Scene* (London, 1935), p. 281.

Chapter 13

FREELANCE YEARS 1933 - 1939

1. Published in 1969 and contains essays on country life.
2. Named by Lawson Wood, the previous owner, after Elizabetha Tokefield, a distant former owner, to take the place of Holly Tree Cottage.
3. Footner had been gambling heavily on the Riviera, but declined Swinnerton's offer of a loan.
4. Ally Willmott (his typist and friend), H G Wells, P P Howe, Phil, Secker, Ursula Rowley and Wheldon amongst others received copies.
5. Letter, Swinnerton to Norah Hault, 25 July 1934.
6. Letter, Swinnerton to Marie Belloc Lowndes, 13 September 1934.
7. *Evening News*, 17 August 1934.
8. *ibid*.
9. Swinnerton diary entry for 13 October 1934.
10. It would be retitled *Harvest Comedy* and published in 1937. It would take almost three years to write.
11. Letter, A A Milne to Swinnerton, 28 February 1935.

12. Tape recording of meeting between Michael Geare and Swinnerton in July 1982.
13. J M Dent was the first.
14. Norah Hault, Saxton, Dorothy Cheston Bennett, the L A G Stronges and the Richard Churches all visited.
15. *Evening Standard*, 28 March 1935.
16. *Daily Mail*, 4 April 1935.
17. *Life and Letters* (April 1935), 90-94 (p. 90).
18. *ibid*, p. 91.
19. *New York Post*, 13 December 1934.
20. *New York Sun*, 8 December 1934.
21. *Monthly List of New Books: John Menzies*, no. 1122 (June 1938).
22. Letter, Henry Tomlinson to Swinnerton, 22 March 1936.
23. William Soskin, *New York Herald Tribune*, 22 November 1936.
24. *Evening Standard*, 25 February 1937.
25. *Daily Mail*, 2 September 1937.
26. *The Times*, 5 September 1937.
27. *Daily Telegraph*, 7 September 1937.
28. *Daily Mirror*, 13 September 1937.
29. Letter, A J Cronin to Swinnerton, 14 November 1937.
(University of Arkansas).
30. *Boston Evening Transcript*, 19 February 1938.
31. Letter, Swinnerton to Chatto & Windus, 30 April 1937.
32. Article published in *Good Housekeeping* (September 1938).
33. Letter, Ralph Pinker to Swinnerton, 16 March 1939.
34. He was taking tablets for pain in his arm, neck and side of his head.
35. 'A thrush stared me down the other evening (he had a snail in

the side path) that in the end I had to go round the other way and out of the front gate! What a garden!' Extract from a letter, Swinnerton to Mary Swinnerton, 30 June 1939.

36. Letter, Swinnerton to Mary Swinnerton, 3 July 1939.
37. Letter, Swinnerton to Chatto & Windus, 29 October 1937, in which he asks them to contact the author to stop him from pestering Swinnerton. Chatto & Windus archives.
38. Michael De-la-Noy, *Denton Welch: The Making of a Writer* (London, 1984), p. 173.
39. Letter, John Hadfield to Swinnerton, 22 April 1938. Dent archives.
40. Letter, John Hadfield to Swinnerton, 23 May 1938. Dent archives.
41. Letter, John Hadfield to Swinnerton, 3 November 1939. Dent archives.
42. Rouse manuscript, p. 132.
43. The list of articles read is given below.
 - 'You Can't Beat Married Life', *Tit-Bits* (no date).
 - 'New Lamps for Old', *Christmas Book Magazine*, the Bookshop, Cranleigh (no date), 2-4.
 - 'The Art and Practice of Reviewing', *London Mercury*, vol. 30, no. 180 (1934), 536-542.
 - 'Why Foreigners Shun England', *Life and Letters* (October 1934), 112-115.
 - 'Literature 1910-1935', *Schoolmistress*, vol. 107, no. 2776 (1935), 573, 598.
 - 'Authorship', in *The Book World* (Thomas Nelson, 1935), pp. 12-35.

- 'Noise: The Enemy', *Quiet* (June 1936), 29-31.
- 'What Novels Can Teach', in *University of Books* (London, 1936), pp. 1-11.
- 'Cats', *Animals Magazine*, vol. 16, no. 5 (1937), 101-104.
- 'Bogey', *Animals Magazine*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1934) 37, 46.
- 'Red and Blue', *Time and Tide*, vol. 38, no. 18 (1937) 541-542.
- 'What I Want My Daughter to Be', *Good Housekeeping* (September 1938), 10-11, 95-96.
- 'Variations of Form in the Novel', in *Essays and Studies*, vol. 23 (London, 1938) pp. 79-92.
- 'The Superiority of the Cat Over the Dog', *Animals Magazine*, Special Cat Number, vol. 17, no. 10 (1938), 186-187.
- 'Good Drinking and Bad Drinking', *True Temperance Quarterly*, no. 22 (May 1938), 4-7.
- 'The Ideal Heroine', *Good Housekeeping* (April 1939), 52-53, 175-177.
- 'On Book Tokens', *Christmas Book Magazine* (1939) 41.

Chapter 14

HUGH WALPOLE: A DIFFICULT FRIENDSHIP

1. Neither won.
2. Walpole's was *The Wooden Horse*, published in 1909.
Swinerton's was *The Merry Heart*.
3. Their 'twinness' would also work against them. Whilst in New York together at one time George Doran confused their names so consistently that eventually Walpole protested - and was accused of jealousy.

4. Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole: A Biography* (London, 1952) p. 148. When Walpole wrote to Swinnerton in 1941, he stated that he had been going through old letters and found a batch dated between 1912-1914. This is the only time such an early correspondence has been mentioned. No letters are noted in Swinnerton's diary before 1915, and there seems to be no evidence of a meeting prior to 1915.
5. When Swinnerton wrote to Walpole in 1918, he agreed that he liked *The Green Mirror*, but objected to its mystical element. In reply Walpole wrote on the 22 January 1918, 'To tell you the truth what I miss in your books is exactly what you hate in mine - the fantasy, the "spooks", call it what you will'.
6. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 29 January 1918.
7. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 26 May 1920.
8. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 27 May 1920.
9. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 22 September 1920.
10. Letter, Arnold Bennett to Hugh Walpole, 23 March 1922.
11. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, 21 September 1924.
12. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 28 February 1937.
13. Letter, Hugh Walpole to Swinnerton, 26 January 1941.
14. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, from Yorkshire, 4 February 1941.
15. *Dictionary of National Biography: 1941-1950*, p. 922.

Chapter 15

THE WAR YEARS 1940 - 1945

1. Forty-three letters from Swinnerton to the Pinkers were sent to me by Fanchon Rouse, of Arkansas, USA. Other letters were

available at the special collections department of the University of Arkansas.

2. In fact matters improved and Hutchinson was still publishing his fiction in the 1970s.
3. In 1929 he had been offered £21. An amicable agreement must have been reached as he continued to review for the paper until 1945.
4. Letter, Swinnerton to Rupert Hart-Davis, 6 June 1957.
5. Letter, Swinnerton to Hugh Walpole, from Yorkshire, 4 February 1941.
6. Because of the war the Brighton house leased from Dorothy French for Mrs Bennett had to be vacated. In order to terminate the lease Swinnerton paid up to the end of 1940 and removed Mrs Bennett to Old Tokefield.
7. He made another will at the beginning of the year.
8. Letter, Swinnerton to Norah Hoult, 10 September 1940, in which he listed his fears. (University of Arkansas).
9. Only 12,000 copies had been sold to date, which did not cover the advance.
10. Letter, Swinnerton to Hamish Hamilton, 3 April 1941.
11. Letter, Ralph Pinker to Swinnerton, 26 March 1941.
12. Letter, Swinnerton to Hamish Hamilton, 3 June 1941.
13. The Reform Club closed in August 1940 and re-opened to numerous resignations. All Swinnerton's colleagues were either dead, had resigned (H G Wells), or were living away. Only A G Gardiner frequented the Club until this latest closure.
14. 'Citizen, Defend Yourself!', *Victory*, no. 1 (Autumn 1941).
'Wartime in the Country', *Homes and Gardens* (September

1941).

15. Rouse manuscript, p. 135.
16. Letter, Norah Hoult to Swinnerton, 21 May 1941. (University of Arkansas).
17. Letter, Richard Church to Swinnerton, 23 May 1941. (University of Arkansas).
18. Letter, Norah Hoult to Swinnerton, 21 June 1941. (University of Arkansas).
19. Letter, Norah Hoult to Swinnerton, 6 November 1941.
20. The titles of these broadcasts are:
 - 'Books I Have Read, January - March'.
 - 'Increase of Sales of Second-hand Books in War'.
 - 'The Kind of Books Needed in Wartime Britain'.
 - 'Current Reading: (Children's Books to Olivia)'.
 - 'British Authors and Their Work in Wartime'.
 - 'British Reading Habits'.
 - 'New Novels', which included Vicki Baum's *Grand Opera*, Frances Brett Young's *A Man About the House*, and L A G Strong's *Unpractised Heart*.
21. 'The Verdict' in *London Calling*, ed. by Storm Jameson (London, 1942), pp. 125-132.
22. 'The Writer in Wartime', *Harpers Magazine* (August 1942).
23. Rouse manuscript, pp. 136/137.
24. *ibid*, p. 138.
25. Letter, Norah Hoult to Swinnerton, October 1942. (University of Arkansas).
26. 'Novelist Praises County of His Adoption', *Yorkshire Post*, 20 July 1942.

27. Letter, Swinnerton to Lionel Curtis, 25 June 1943. (University of Oxford).
28. Letter, Swinnerton to Norah Hoult, 31 July 1944. (University of Arkansas).
29. Lisle Bell, Weekly Book Review, *New York Herald Tribune*, 25 March 1945.
30. *New York Times*, 10 March 1945.
31. Details of which books were awarded translation rights are:

CZECHOSLOVAKIA	Georgian House
	English Maiden
	Woman in Sunshine
SPAIN	Thankless Child
	Nocturne
	Georgian House
	Summer Storm
	Woman in Sunshine
SWEDEN	Woman in Sunshine
PORTUGAL	Woman in Sunshine
DENMARK	Harvest Comedy
	Georgian House
	Faithful Company
NETHERLANDS	Georgian House
NORWAY	Nocturne
HUNGARY	Woman in Sunshine (All royalties to PEN Club).
	English Maiden (All royalties to PEN Club).
GERMANY	Harvest Comedy
FINLAND	Woman in Sunshine
	Georgian House

SOURCE: Letters between Swinnerton and Richard Steele.

(University of Arkansas).

Chapter 16

YEARS OF PEACEFUL DOMESTIC RETIREMENT 1946 - 1950

1. 22 February.
2. 'Concerning Mr Swinnerton', in Bennett, *Critical Appreciations*, p. 17.
3. *ibid*, p. 19.
4. *Grand Rapids Herald*, 17 October 1926.
5. David C Smith, *H.G. Wells: Desperately Mortal* (London, 1986).
6. *ibid*, p. 155.
7. *ibid*, pp. 156/157.
8. Letter, A A Milne to Swinnerton, 20 October 1946. (University of Arkansas).
9. Letter, Norah Hoult to Swinnerton, 22 February 1947. (University of Arkansas).
10. Rouse manuscript, p. 142.
11. *ibid*, p. 143.
12. 'J M Barrie' on 22 July; 'G K Chesterton' on 29 July; and 'A Holiday With Arnold Bennett' on 5 August. All reviewed in 'Did You Hear?' in *Listener*.
13. Rouse manuscript pp. 144, 145.
14. *ibid*, p. 147.
15. Letter, Norah Hoult to Swinnerton, 8 May 1948. (University of Arkansas).
16. Letter, Swinnerton to Norah Hoult, 10 May 1948. (University of Arkansas).
17. Wilson Follett, 'An Unhappy Scoundrel', *New York Times*, 20

June 1948.

18. Letter, Swinnerton to Norah Houlton, 16 February 1949.
(University of Arkansas).
19. Rouse manuscript, p. 155.
20. *ibid*, p. 157.
21. Vol. 2, no. 1 (1949).
22. 'Books for Delight', 2 June. Reprinted in *Essays* (Tokyo, 1949).
23. *These are The Cats and Rosemary* (In the USA), *Tokefield Papers* (reissue) and *The Doctor's Wife Comes to Stay*.
24. *The Gondoliers*, 18 February; *The Mikado*, 11 March; both at Golders Green. *HMS Pinafore*, 3 June; *Iolanthe*, 10 June; both at Sadlers Wells. *Trial By Jury*, 8 July.
25. *Coppelia* on 25 February.
26. Rouse manuscript, p. 148.
27. Letter, Norah Houlton to Swinnerton, 12 December 1950.
(University of Arkansas).

Chapter 17

YEARS OF PEACEFUL DOMESTIC RETIREMENT 1951 - 1960

1. Swinnerton, *The Bookman's London*, John Baker Ltd. ed. (London 1969), p. 15.
2. *ibid*, p.20.
3. Letter, F G Howe to Swinnerton, 1 December 1951.
4. Letter, Samuel Ratcliffe to Swinnerton, 1 April 1951.
5. James Aswell, *Houston Post*, 1 June 1952.
6. 'Words and Sentences', *Modern Reading*, no. 19 (Autumn 1951), 46 - 48.

7. 'From Boyhood to Publishing Days', *Drama* (Winter 1951), 10-14.
8. 'A Model for Young Writers', *Everybody's Weekly*, 15 December 1951.
9. Pamela Ruskin, 'An Author for Your Bookshelf', *Australasian Post*, 26 July 1951, p. 29.
10. Frank Swinnerton, *Londoner's Post* (London, 1969), p. 47.
11. *ibid*, p. 47.
12. 'Death of John O'London', *Truth*, 10 September 1954.
13. Rouse manuscript, p. 159.
14. Letter, Richard Church to Swinnerton, 16 September 1952.
15. *Daily Telegraph*, 30 October 1953.
16. Rose Feld, *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 December 1955.
17. *Sunday Times*, 10 July 1955.
18. *The Times*, 7 July 1955.
19. Rouse manuscript, p. 164.
20. *Time and Tide*, vol. 37, no. 30 (1956), 907-908.
21. *The Writer*, vol. 17, no. 1, new series (1956), 4-6.
22. *Books* (Journal of the National Book League), special edition, no. 30 (April-May 1956), 87.
23. *Contemporary Review*, no. 1086 (June 1956), 333-338.
24. Lorine Alexander, *Birmingham News* (USA), 5 May 1957.
25. Harry T Moore, *Books and Bookmen* (USA) (1957).
26. *Library Review*, no. 124 (Winter 1957), 234-238.
27. *Saturday Review*, 2 March 1957, 7-9.
28. Untitled newspaper, 21 July 1957.
29. Rouse manuscript, p. 171.
30. *ibid*, pp. 173/174.
31. *Bridgeport Sunday Post*, 22 January 1961.

32. *Library Review*, no. 134 (Summer 1960), 396-399.
33. 'Bloomsbury Old Guard', *Saturday Review*, 19 November 1960, p. 49.

Chapter 18

GRAND OLD MAN OF LETTERS 1961 - 1969

1. Letter, Swinnerton to Rupert Hart-Davis, 24 December 1961.
2. *The Lyttleton-Hart-Davis Letters*, vol. 2 (London, 1979), p. 59. The incident took place in February 1957.
3. Rouse manuscript, p. 179.
4. Letter, Richard Church to Swinnerton, 4 August 1961.
5. Letter, Norah Houlst to Swinnerton, 15 November 1961.
(University of Arkansas).
6. *New Yorker*, 19 May 1962.
7. *New York Times Book Review*, 24 June 1962.
8. *New York Times*, 1 June 1962.
9. *Lady*, 30 November 1961.
10. *Spectator*, 3 November 1961.
11. *The Times*, 8 November 1961.
12. *Figures in the Foreground*, pp. 11/12.
13. Walter Allen, 'Some Literary Gang-Wars of Yesterday', untitled newspaper, 14 June 1964.
14. *Library Review*, no. 148 (Winter 1963), p. 304.
15. *Country Life*, 26 September 1963.
16. *The Times*, 7 May 1964, p. 10.
17. *ibid.*
18. *Evening Standard*, 6 May 1964.
19. Letter, Swinnerton to Rupert Hart-Davis, 13 August 1964.

20. Theodore M O'Leary, *Kansas City Star*, 30 May 1965.
21. *Daily Telegraph*, 31 January 1965.
22. 'Girl In Flight', *Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 27 (1966), 3-10.
23. Edmund Fuller, *Wall Street Journal*, 23 August 1966.
24. *Jacksonville Journal* (Florida), 11 September 1966.
25. *Sunday Times*, 23 February 1969.
26. *TLS*, 20 October 1966.
27. *St Louis Post-Despatch*, 28 May 1967.
28. Letter, Winston Graham to Irene Campbell, 20 August 1985.
29. *ibid.*
30. *Stage*, 23 May 1968.
31. *The Times Review*, 18 May 1968.
32. *Books and Bookmen* (December 1969).
33. *Reflections From a Village*, p. 151.
34. *New York Times*, 6 August 1969.
35. *Sunday Times*, 23 February 1969.
36. Eric Hills talking in 1989.

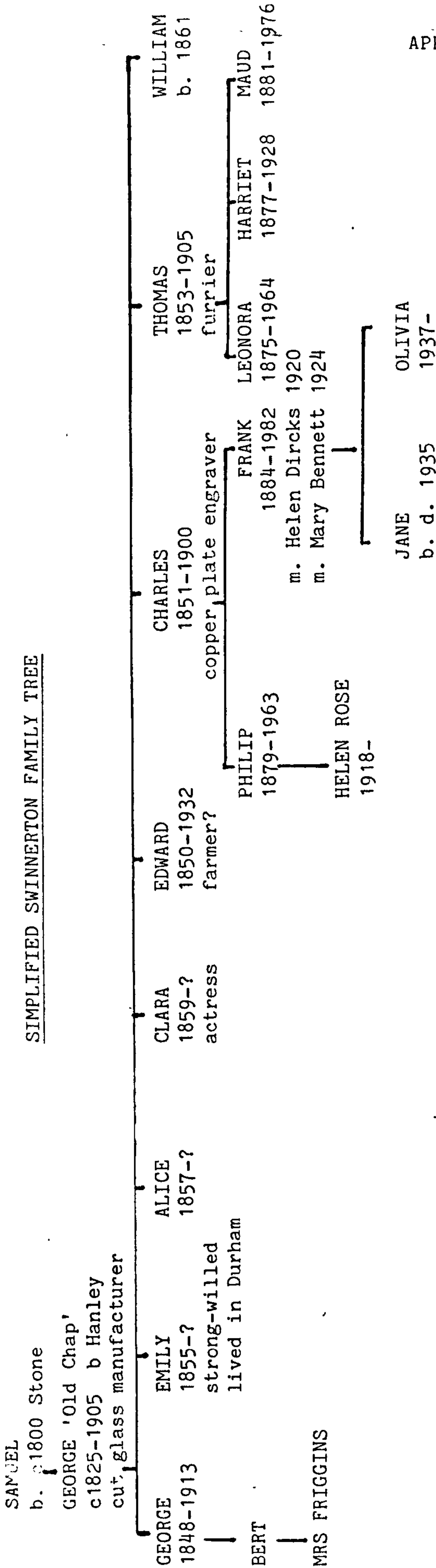
Chapter 19

GRAND OLD MAN OF LETTERS 1970 - 1982

1. Rouse manuscript, p. 188.
2. *ibid*, p. 188.
3. *Herald Advertiser*, Huntington, West Virginia, 11 April 1971.
4. Rouse manuscript, p. 190.
5. Swinnerton, *Autobiography*, p. 334.
6. Andro Linklater, *Compton Mackenzie: A Life* (London, 1987), p. 139.

7. *Sunday Times*, 3 December 1972. Obituary of Mackenzie by Swinnerton.
8. Rouse manuscript, p. 191.
9. Letter, Swinnerton to Katie Frost, 18 August 1974.
10. Letter, Winston Graham to Swinnerton, 10 March 1976.
11. *The Times*, 30 November 1976.
12. *West Surrey County Times*, 6/7 January 1976.
13. *Daily Advertiser*, 6 January 1976.
14. *The Age*, 6 November 1976.
15. *ibid.*
16. Derek Parker, *The Times*, [April] 1976.
17. *Sunday Times*, 18 April 1976.
18. Letter, Rupert Hart-Davis to Swinnerton, 2 May 1976.
19. *Sunday Times*, no date, 1978.
20. *Daily Telegraph*, 19 March 1978.
21. *Books and Bookmen* (April 1978).
22. *Sunday Times*, 12 August 1979, p.6. A quote by Swinnerton.
23. Letter, Harold A Albert to Irene Campbell, 29 October 1984.
24. Letter, Swinnerton to Roger Till, 17 August 1980.
25. *Daily Telegraph*, 9 November 1982, obituary.
26. *Bookseller*, 31 November 1982.
27. *The Times*, 10 November 1982, obituary.
28. *Books and Bookmen* (Early 1983).
29. 'Unappreciated Authors', *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review* (March 1984).

SIMPLIFIED SWINNERTON FAMILY TREE



APPENDIX I

DISTAFF SIDE

RICHARD PELL COTTAM m. GRAN'MA (SCOTTISH ORIGINS)

"Grumps"

Steel Engraver

map colourist

APPENDIX II

Bibliography of published miscellaneous pieces
during 1920

- | | | |
|----------|----|--|
| January | 1 | 'The Londoner' in <i>Bookman</i> (US) |
| | 7 | 'Theatres' in <i>Truth</i> |
| | 7 | Review of <i>Old People and the Things that Pass</i> in
<i>Daily Herald</i> |
| | 10 | 'Hamlet' in <i>Nation</i> |
| | 14 | 'Theatres' in <i>Truth</i> |
| | 17 | 'Mr Pym Passes By' in <i>Nation</i> |
| | 21 | 'Theatres' in <i>Truth</i> |
| | 24 | 'Julius Caesar' in <i>Nation</i> |
| | 28 | 'Theatres' in <i>Truth</i> |
| | 30 | 'Craftsmen Critics' in <i>Athenaeum</i> |
| | 31 | 'Stage Society' in <i>Nation</i> |
| February | 1 | 'The Londoner' in <i>Bookman</i> (US) |
| March | 1 | 'The Londoner' in <i>Bookman</i> (US) |
| | 10 | Note on 'Boy of my Heart' in <i>Truth</i> |
| | 13 | 'The Three Sisters' in <i>Nation</i> |
| | 17 | 'Theatres' in <i>Truth</i> |
| | 20 | 'Pygmalion' in <i>Nation</i> |
| | 24 | 'Theatres' in <i>Truth</i> |
| | 27 | 'Sinners Both' in <i>Nation</i> |
| | 31 | 'Theatres' in <i>Truth</i> |
| April | 1 | 'The Londoner' in <i>Bookman</i> (US) |
| | 3 | 'From Morn to Midnight' in <i>Nation</i> |
| | 7 | 'Theatres' in <i>Truth</i> |
| | 10 | 'Uncle Ned' in <i>Nation</i> |

- 14 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 17 Review of *Brighthouse* in *Nation*
- 21 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 24 'Anton Tchegov' in *John O'London's Weekly*
- 24 'Paddy the Next Best Thing' in *Nation*
- 28 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 28 Review of *Well-to-do Arthur* and *Lighting-up Time*
in *Daily Herald*
- May 1 'The Londoner' in *Bookman* (US)
- 1 'The Skin Game' in *Nation*
- 8 'As You Like It' in *Nation*
- 12 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 19 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 22 'The Difficulties of Criticism' in *Athenaeum*
- 26 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- June 1 'The Londoner' in *Bookman* (US)
- 2 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 9 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 12 'The Beggar's Opera' in *Nation*
- 16 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 19 'The S S Tenacity' in *Nation*
- 23 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 23 Review of *Potterism* in *Daily Herald*
- 25 Review of *The Mills of the Gods* in *Manchester Guardian*
- 26 'Such a Nice Young Man' in *Nation*
- 30 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- July 1 'The Londoner' in *Bookman* (US)

- 7 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 7 'The Cherry Orchard' in *Nation*
- 9 Review of *The Happy Foreigner* in *Manchester Guardian*
- 25 'Too Proud to Fight' (Short Story) in *Hutchinson's Magazine* for August
- August 1 'The Londoner' in *Bookman* (US)
- 18 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 21 'The Unknown' in *Nation*
- September 1 'The Londoner' in *Bookman* (US)
- 1 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 4 'His Lady Friends' in *Nation*
- 8 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 15 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 22 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 24 Review of *The Tragic Bride* in *Manchester Guardian*
- 25 'The Hand' (Short Story) in *Hutchinson's Magazine* for October
- 25 'The Prude's Fall' in *Nation*
- 29 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- October 1 'The Londoner' in *Bookman* (US)
- 2 'The Romantic Young Lady' in *Nation*
- 6 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 6 Review of *Tree Biography* in *Truth*
- 7 'The Everyman Theatre' in *Nation*
- 16 'The White-headed Boy' in *Nation*
- 20 'Theatres' in *Truth*
- 20 'The Boy' (Short Story) in *Hutchinson's Magazine* for

November

27 'Theatres' in *Truth*

30 'The Romantic Age' in *Nation*

November 1 'The Londoner' in *Bookman* (US)

5 Review of *The People of the Ruins* in *Manchester Guardian*

6 'Mr Galsworthy's Philosophy of Life' in *Nation*

26 Review of *Forward from Babylon* in *Manchester Guardian*

December 1 'The Londoner' in *Bookman* (US)

1 'Theatres' in *Truth*

8 'Theatres' in *Truth*

15 'Theatres' in *Truth*

17 Review of *The Age of Innocence* in *Manchester Guardian*

18 'King Lear at the Old Vic' in *Nation*

20 'The Restaurant of the Silver Bells' (Short Story)
in *Hutchinson's Magazine*

22 'Theatres' in *Truth*

25 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in *Nation*

29 'Theatres' in *Truth*

SOURCE: A book found amongst Swinnerton's papers, in which he kept a record of all his submissions to newspapers and journals.

APPENDIX III

Bibliography of Swinnerton's published works

- 1909 The Merry Heart
1910 The Young Idea
1911 The Casement
1912 The Happy Family
1912 George Gissing: A Critical Study
1914 On the Staircase
1914 R L Stevenson: A Critical Study
1916 The Chaste Wife
1917 Nocturne
1918 Shops and Houses
1918 Women
1919 September
1921 Coquette
1922 The Three Lovers
1923 Young Felix
1925 The Elder Sister
1926 Summer Storm
1927 Tokefield Papers
1928 A London Bookman
1928 A Brood of Ducklings
1929 Sketch of a Sinner
1932 Authors and the Book Trade
1932 The Georgian House
1934 Elizabeth
1935 The Georgian Literary Scene

- 1937 Swinnerton: An Autobiography
- 1937 Harvest Comedy
- 1939 The Two Wives
- 1939 The Reviewing and Criticism of Books
- 1941 The Fortunate Lady
- 1942 Thankless Child
- 1944 A Woman in Sunshine
- 1946 English Maiden
- 1948 Faithful Company
- 1949 The Doctor's Wife Comes to Stay
- 1950 The Cats and Rosemary
- 1950 A Flower for Catherine
- 1951 The Bookman's London
- 1952 Master Jim Probity
- 1952 Londoner's Post
- 1953 A Month in Gordon Square
- 1955 The Summer Intrigue
- 1956 Authors I Never Met
- 1956 Background with Chorus
- 1957 The Woman from Sicily
- 1959 A Tigress in Prothero
- 1960 The Grace Divorce
- 1961 Death of a Highbrow
- 1963 Figures in the Foreground
- 1965 Quadrille
- 1966 A Galaxy of Fathers
- 1966 Sanctuary
- 1968 The Bright Lights

- 1969 Reflections from a Village
- 1970 On the Shady Side
- 1972 Nor All Thy Tears
- 1973 Rosalind Passes
- 1976 Some Achieve Greatness
- 1978 Arnold Bennett: A Last Word

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